

Iran denies Israeli TV prison report

TEHRAN (AFP) — The director of Evin prison in Tehran on Sunday denied that Israeli television had telephoned the jail while on air last week to ask about the whereabouts of missing airman Ron Arad. Hossein Fakhri told the official agency IRNA that the Israeli report was "baseless and full of lies," as were claims that Mr. Arad was being held in Evin prison. The Israeli airman went missing after his plane was shot down over Lebanon in 1986, and a German newspaper, the Frankfurter Allgemeine, reported Monday that he may be in Evin jail. Israeli state television said Wednesday it had telephoned a spokesman for Evin prison to ask if Mr. Arad was in the jail. The spokesman asked the caller to ring back the next day, it said. But the prison has no spokesman, Mr. Fakhri said. Iran has also denied press reports that it has been negotiating with Israel for years for the release of the airman. Israel has confirmed past contacts with Iran but insisted they produced nothing.

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2 Israeli soldiers accused of selling arms to Palestinian

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli police have arrested two soldiers accused of selling arms to a Palestinian in order to buy drugs, police said Sunday. The soldiers are suspected of handing over Uzi automatic weapons, grenades, ammunition and guns to a Palestinian from the occupied West Bank town of Nablus. The army was alerted to the alleged trade when it arrested the Palestinian last month and discovered he had three Uzi guns from its own stocks as well as 3,000 bullets and three grenades. A police investigator told military radio there could be further arrests of soldiers. "The affair is not closed, there will be more arrests on both sides," said police inspector Eli Zarka. "Apparently the soldiers wanted money to be able to buy drugs," he added. The identity of the two soldiers was not revealed and the army has refused to comment on the arrests.

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Rabin proposes small-scale withdrawal from Golan Heights

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has proposed a small-scale withdrawal from the Golan Heights over three years to test Syria's desire for peace, state radio reported Sunday.

But a military intelligence report to Sunday's cabinet meeting warned that Syria was not prepared to make any compromise deals.

"We only want to carry out a small-scale withdrawal over a period of two and a half to three years, to put to the test Syria's willingness to reach total normalisation including an exchange of ambassadors and open borders," Mr. Rabin told a Labour Party meeting.

The premier recalled that Israel returned only half the Sinai peninsula to Egypt over two years and two months to test normalisation after the two countries' 1979 peace treaty.

"With Syria this test will be

longer and the withdrawal more limited," Mr. Rabin told the meeting late Saturday.

But Sunday's six-hour cabinet meeting was told Syrian President Hafez Al Assad "believes time is on his side and he is not prepared to make the slightest compromise on the Golan Heights," military radio reported.

"Syria has no intention of going to war against Israel," the annual military intelligence report said. But "if there is no breakthrough this year, there will be no peace accord with Syria before the next elections," set for 1996 in Israel.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is due to set off Tuesday on his latest Middle East shuttle mission and will visit both Israel and Syria in a bid to break the deadlock in stalled peace negotiations.

Mr. Assad on Tuesday re-

jected outright any accord with Israel which ignores the interests of his country.

The main stumbling block between the two is the scope and timetable for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, captured in 1967 and annexed in 1981.

Mr. Rabin slammed as "liars" Israelis who said it was possible to secure peace without a withdrawal from the Golan, including right-wing opposition parties and Labour Party "bawks."

One labour hardliner, Avigdor Kahalani, has said he would visit the United States in coming days to lobby against any pull-back and deployment of U.S. troops as observers on the Golan, as Mr. Rabin has proposed.

"He does not represent the Labour Party," Mr. Rabin said.

Syria wants an Israeli commitment to a total pull-back from the strategic plateau be-

fore it will discuss a peace treaty. However Israel first wants a Syrian pledge to normalise ties before outlining the scale of withdrawal.

Israeli Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein said the "time of war which we have known since creation of our country is passed. But there are still great difficulties to overcome for us to reach an agreement with President Assad."

More generally the report found that Israel does not face any danger of war, and said that it would take Iran "a minimum of three years to possess an atomic weapon."

But the heads of intelligence warned there would be an increase in the number of attacks by Palestinian militants.

"Time is on Israel's side," the report said adding that the "peace process is irreversible."



His Majesty King Hussein and Her Majesty Queen Noor Friday honour professor Heinz Stammberger of Austria

after the King underwent a minor surgery at King Hussein Medical Centre Friday.

King in good health after minor surgery

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein is in good health following a minor surgery at King Hussein Medical Centre, Major General Yousef Gousus, the director of the Royal Medical Services, said Sunday.

Dr. Gousus told the Jordan Times that the King underwent a simple procedure at King Hussein Medical Centre where a naso-pharyngeal cyst was removed endoscopically by Professor Heinz Stammberger of Austria on Friday.

The cyst used to cause recurrent infection of the middle ear and its removal will prevent the recurrence of infection, Dr. Gousus said.

In two months time the King may undergo another minor surgery for the repair of the drum of the right ear, Dr. Gousus said.

"The endoscopic procedure was completed very successfully and His Majesty's condition is excellent," he added.

In a statement to Radio Jordan after the surgery King Hussein said that the trouble in the middle ear resulted from flying planes and his constant exercises with the Jordanian Armed Forces.

During his stay in hospital, the King and Her Majesty, Queen Noor toured the hospital's wards and talked to patients, wishing them

speedy recovery.

Upon leaving the hospital the King was met by a huge crowd of well wishers. Later during the day King Hussein and Queen Noor received at Al Nadwa Palace Prof. Stammberger and his two assistants.

King Hussein presented the Graz, Austria-based professor with the Jordanian Independence Medal of the First Order and gifts to his assistants in recognition of their services. Chief of the Royal Court Marwan Al Qassem attended the audience.

Arafat congratulates King

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Sunday received a telephone call from Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat who congratulated the King on the success of the surgery he underwent on Friday. King Hussein and Mr. Arafat exchanged views on several issues of common interest, including the Middle East peace process and means of overcoming problems facing it.

Sharif Zeid returns

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker on Sunday returned home from Turkey after a three-day private visit. Sharif Zeid was received at the airport by Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Abdul Raouf Al Rawabdeh, Deputy Prime Minister Khalid Al Karaki and Minister of State for the Ministry of Affairs Ibrahim Izzeddin.

Velayati meets new Iraqi envoy

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayati said he hoped for an improvement in ties with Iraq as he met the new Iraqi charge of d'affaires here Sunday, the official agency IRNA said. Mr. Velayati said he hoped Salah Nuri Al Samarrad, who arrived in Tehran at the beginning of the year, would "succeed in improving and developing relations" between Iran and Iraq. Mr. Samarrad said for his part he was "optimistic about the future of relations" between the two countries, the agency said. Iran and Iraq maintained diplomatic ties during their 1980-1988 war. However relations, still only at the level of charge d'affaires, are frosty, caused mainly by the issue of prisoners and people missing in action during the conflict. Iran accuses Iraq of holding up to 15,000 Iranian prisoners, which Baghdad denies counter-charging that thousands of Iraqis are still in Iranian jails.

Iran begins war games in Straits of Hormuz

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian armed forces on Sunday began military manoeuvres in the waters of the Straits of Hormuz at the entrance to the Gulf, the official agency IRNA said. The exercises in Iran's territorial waters came only days after the United States charged that Tehran had deployed missiles on islands in the area. IRNA said the five-day manoeuvres were aimed at "boosting the performance" of the armed forces saying that the air force, naval warships and submarines would be taking part. On Tuesday U.S. Joint Chief of Staff General John Shalikashvili said U.S. reconnaissance had spotted Iran putting Hawk missiles onto launchers on islands in the Gulf. U.S. National Security Advisor Anthony Lake said the build-up of weaponry on three islands appeared to be defensive. Iran implicitly confirmed the deployment, stressing its defence concerns against a possible Israeli threat, and adding that it had the right to carry out "routine" military exercises.

No U.S. response to EU proposal for joint action to save peace talks

By Ayman Al Safadi Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The United States has not yet responded to specific proposals Europe has made for a joint European-American action to save the staggering Middle East peace process, a Western diplomatic source has said.

While another source expected the U.S. to "ignore" the proposal which the European Union (EU) sent to the U.S. after the visit of the EU Troika delegation to the region last month, the European diplomatic source said he would not share the "pessimism," saying that the U.S. and Europe have an interest in seeing the peace talks succeed.

No information was available on the actual proposals Europe has made through a letter sent by French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe to his U.S. counterpart Warren Christopher. But the diplomatic source said it involves a joint European-U.S. action to save the troubled peace talks.

The source said the EU wanted to secure a more active role in the peace

process because it has a real interest in its success and not because it wants to compete with the U.S.

"There should be no competition between the U.S. and Europe because the objective is the same," the source said.

The source said Mr. Juppe had invited Mr. Christopher to Paris after the latter's Middle Eastern tour which starts Wednesday to initiate contact over the proposals but Mr. Christopher's schedule would not allow him to make the trip.

Europe is an active player in the multilateral track of the negotiations but it has been denied any real role in the bilateral talks.

European officials have repeatedly expressed discontent about these arrangements, noting that they are the major financier of the peace process while most of the credit is going to the U.S.

"The EU proposal is a last chance effort to save the peace talks" which are deadlocked on the Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian tracks, said the source.

"We have a real interest to contribute (to the success of the) process and

take political risks for that," the European source said.

The source said that Europe's bid to play a more active role in the peace process is motivated by the strategic interests the EU has in seeing the process succeed.

European officials have said that their interests in the region differ from those of the U.S. due to the geographic proximity of Europe to the area and the reverberations that any conflict in the region would have within its borders.

To stress these interests, Europe is preparing for a Mediterranean conference in Barcelona towards the end of the year where it would discuss a strategy for cooperation between countries of the region.

The strategy is likely to entail a six billion European Currency Units economic programme for the southern countries of the Mediterranean which the EU views as central to its own stability and economic prosperity.

Attending the conference will be 11 countries in the Mediterranean region which have signed agreements with the EU.

Arafat, Peres meet Thursday to end peace 'paralysis'

By Wafa Amr Reuter

GAZA — Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat scheduled a meeting for Thursday to try to break an impasse in peace moves that Palestinians on Sunday said were paralysed.

"With the way the Israeli government is handling this peace process now, it is going down the drain," Saeh Erekat, in charge of local government in Mr. Arafat's Palestinian Authority, told reporters.

Nabil Shaath, in charge of planning for the authority, said the PLO would present its grievances to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher when he visited self-ruled Gaza during a Middle East peace mission this week.

Ahmed Korei, in charge of the economy in the authority, said: "The meeting between Peres and President Arafat will take place on Thursday."

Mr. Korei, better known as Abu Alaa, spoke to Reuters after the weekly meeting of the self-rule authority, saying: "We will discuss the usual things — expansion of Palestinian authority in the West Bank and redeployment."

Talks on extending self-rule from Gaza Strip and the

West Bank town of Jericho to more of the West Bank after a January suicide bombing by two men from Gaza killed 21 Israelis north of Tel Aviv.

Israel, which sealed off Gaza and the West Bank preventing Palestinians from working in the Jewish state following the bombing, began issuing 3,500 new permits on Sunday. This was on top of 15,000 new permits distributed in February.

Israel says Mr. Arafat must control militants operating from his territory against Israel before self-rule can be extended.

"We are doing our best," Dr. Shaath said. He blamed Israel.

"Israel has clamped a total paralysis on the peace process and this has had serious security effects on the West Bank," he said. "They are simply refusing to negotiate anything."

He accused Israel of delaying talks on matters due to have been implemented last year as part of the Gaza-Jericho accord.

"They are also refusing to negotiate on building a Palestinian port, the passage of goods and cars through

border crossings with Egypt and Jordan, and are clamping a total paralysis on postal services, water and archaeology," he said.

PLO officials said the authority was angry at statements attributed to Mr. Peres by the German magazine Der Spiegel on Saturday that Mr. Arafat must show more will-power to fight "terror."

Mr. Arafat had to show the will to bring the peace process along, Mr. Peres said. "If he is too weak to do that or lacks the will, why should we negotiate with him at all?"

Yasser Abed Rabbo, a member of the Palestinian Authority in charge of culture, said Mr. Peres' statements were "very dangerous, and are a violation of the PLO-Israel accord."

Security sources said Israel, in a goodwill gesture to mark the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, would allow Palestinians to unseal or rebuild 40 houses sealed or destroyed by troops as punishment for security offences.

Palestinians and human rights groups condemn as collective punishment the sealing or demolition of houses of suspected security offenders.

Egypt police arrest 7 Brotherhood members

ASSIUT, Egypt (Agencies) — Police in southern Egypt have arrested seven members of the Muslim Brotherhood group on charges of distributing anti-government leaflets and belonging to an illegal group, security sources said on Sunday.

They said the seven, including students, teachers and a medical doctor, were arrested on Thursday, the first day of the Eid Al Fitr feast, in the southern province of Assiut, about 320 km south of Cairo.

The leaflets allegedly attacked the government for arresting Brotherhood members and for curtailing the activities of professional unions, many of which are dominated by the Brotherhood.

Police arrested 29 leading members of the Brotherhood, Egypt's largest political Islamic organisation, in January for allegedly forming an illegal organisation that threatened state security and stability.

Meanwhile, Egypt's ministry of religious affairs will take control of 100 mosques located in the Islamic stronghold of Minya in southern Egypt, a ministry official announced Sunday.

The Ministry of Waqfs will appoint imams and prayer leaders for the mosques, said Sheikh Salah Al Dali, the director of waqf in the province of Minya, 250 kilometres south of Cairo, according to the official Egyptian news agency MENA.

The province, especially the town of Malawi, became a new bastion for the outlawed Gamaa Islamiyya organisation last summer after police succeeded in driving them from their former hideouts in the neighbouring province of Assiut to the south.

The Minister of Waqfs Mohammed Ali Mahgub announced last December that the ministry plans on seizing 1,000 privately-owned mosques in 1995. The operation will cost the ministry more than \$15 million, mostly to pay salaries of new imams in the mosques, Mr. Mahgub said.

The government launched

(Continued on page 3)

Official: U.S. role in peace process will be in doubt if promises not kept

AMMAN (AFP) — Washington's commitment to securing Middle East peace will be thrown into doubt if it reneges on presidential promises to pay off Jordan's debts, an official said Sunday.

It was the first Jordanian reaction to the decision by the U.S. House of Representatives to reduce President Bill Clinton's request for \$275 million in debt reduction and aid for Jordan to just \$50 million for the financial year.

"The U.S. has said that the cancellation of this debt will represent a positive contribution to peace in the region," said the official, asking not to be named.

"If they decide now to reduce this support, it will seem like a sign of lack of interest on their part."

It is a "test of the seriousness of the American administration in its commitment to secure peace in this region."

Mr. Clinton pledged to

write off Jordan's \$700 million debts to the United States and help the country after attending the signing of the Washington Declaration on July 25.

His administration wrote off \$222 million last year and promised to cancel the remainder in the 1995 and 1996 fiscal years.

The president vowed to try to keep his pledges after the decision last Thursday by the House appropriations committee, which is now dominated by his Republican opponents.

Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Beilin warned Friday the U.S. could pay a "terrible price" if it reneged on Mr. Clinton's promises to pay off Jordan's debts.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin discussed the issue by telephone with Mr. Clinton and was "upset and somewhat alarmed," White House spokesman Michael McCurry said Thursday.

Arabs to test Israel over refugees

By Rana Sabbagh Reuter

AMMAN — Jordan, Egypt and the PLO will test Israel's intentions over the return of Palestinian refugees at a crucial meeting in Amman this week, officials and diplomats said Sunday.

The Arabs want Israel to accept the "right of return" of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in the 1967 Middle East war.

The issue, emotional and sensitive for both sides to the Arab-Israeli conflict, is key to ensure the success of any future permanent settlement.

"We consider the March 7 meeting in Amman as a serious test of Israeli intentions on displaced Palestinians," a senior Arab envoy, who requested anonymity, told Reuters. "And we will be probing Israel's political position on that."

It will be the first meeting of the four-party committee under a 1993 Israeli-PLO peace deal whose implementation on the ground is already facing serious problems.

In the agreement Israel said it would discuss allowing 1967 refugees back provided this will not create chaos and disorder. But it gave no promises on numbers or timing.

The Arabs are still trying to define the number of displaced Palestinians, which according to them could reach 800,000, a figure heavily disputed by Israel.

The mandate of the Amman meeting, originally set for Feb. 26, but postponed because of the schedule of Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, does not cover Palestinians who left what is now Israel during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948.

Mr. Peres will be joined by his Egyptian and Jordanian counterparts, Amr Musa, and Abdul Karim Al Kabiriti, and senior

Palestinian self-rule authority official Nabil Shaath.

The foreign ministers of Jordan and Egypt and a top PLO official agreed at preparatory talks in Cairo in February on a common stand on refugees, causing unease in Israel.

The one-day Amman meeting will seek a criteria for determining the number of the displaced and could set up a "technical body" to determine that, officials said.

Egypt, which ran Gaza from 1950 until 1967, says it has issued 220,000 travel documents to displaced

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Albright ends lobbying mission against Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (R) — U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright, accompanied by intelligence experts, returned this weekend from visiting five nations with seats on the Security Council to convince them to keep sanctions on Iraq.

U.S. officials attributed intelligence given to nations on Iraq's efforts to rebuild its war machine for the strong support Ms. Albright received, telling the New York Times she had beat back efforts to lift the sanctions.

But envoys at the United Nations pointed out that the positions of all member states she visited, except for Italy, were known in advance, so that little opposition was expected.

There has been no formal move to lift sanctions. But Russia, France, China and Indonesia have said they believe the oil embargo will be eased when Iraq complies with arms demands, which are linked to the oil ban.

The U.N. envoys also contended there have not been enough votes in the 15-member divided council to bring a resolution to the floor, and if there were the United States could veto it.

Consequently they said the United States on the tour wanted to make sure member states, particularly Europeans, knew how serious Washington was about maintaining sanctions, even if Iraq did comply with weapons demands.

Oil company executives from numerous countries, particularly from France, are also worried, positioning themselves for deals should

the oil embargo be eased.

Ms. Albright visited Britain, the Czech Republic, Italy, Oman and Honduras in addition to Kuwait, which is not a council member. She cancelled a planned trip to Argentina, another state which has long supported her position.

The Times reported Sunday that the U.S. officials shared intelligence data showing that President Saddam Hussein has been rebuilding factories that could produce chemical weapons or missiles and in general beefing up his military. But it gave no further details.

Her tour comes shortly after a report from Rolf Ekeus, head of the U.N. Special Commission in charge of dismantling Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Ekeus, whose commission often receives information from the United States, however, reported that he was nearly satisfied U.N. inspectors had accounted for all chemical weapons.

But his report was most negative on biological warfare, saying there was evidence of an offensive research programme that might have developed tuberculosis, cholera and plague cultures.

Ms. Albright, in her tour, also took along satellite photos previously exhibited to Security Council members in New York showing Iraq's army using stolen Kuwaiti equipment and detailing the number of mansions Saddam Hussein has built since sanctions were imposed in August 1990 after he invaded Kuwait.

Her presentations have be-

come a regular ritual whenever the Security Council holds its regular 60-day review of sanctions, which is usually preceded by a visit from Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz.

The next review is scheduled for March 13 but no one expects any change in sanctions this month. Mr. Aziz plans to begin another round of lobbying individual members Monday.

At issue is a 1991 Gulf war ceasefire resolution, which the United States wrote, that links scrapping all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical, biological and most ballistic missiles — with lifting the ban on oil exports.

Other demands, such as returning stolen Kuwaiti property and accounting for prisoners of war, are linked in the resolution to sanctions on imports to Iraq.

France, Russia and others argue that the council must stick to the letter of the resolution while Washington maintains Iraq needs to show a pattern of compliance, fearing that once the oil flows again Baghdad will ignore all other demands.

But in another effort to show that Iraq could buy badly needed humanitarian supplies if it wanted to, the United States is considering bringing up to date or re-issuing two resolutions adopted by the council in the summer of 1991.

They allow Baghdad to sell a limited quantity of oil under strict U.N. supervision. Iraq has turned down the offer so far, rejecting U.N. distribution of food supplies.



His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness marking the beginning of the 'Eid Al Fitr' Crown Prince Hassan, Princes and senior (Petra photo) officials attend the dawn prayers Thursday

Iran wants improved ties with Saudi Arabia

NICOSIA (R) — Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia are "not very warm" and Tehran is ready for talks to improve them, Iran's IRNA news agency on Sunday quoted Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati as saying.

It said Velayati, in an interview published in the daily newspaper Iran on Saturday, said Tehran was ready for talks which "would help create an atmosphere of understanding" and benefit both oil-producing countries.

"He said the (Iran-Saudi) ties were not very warm and commented that it takes more than words to establish warm relations and that there should be action as well," IRNA said.

Relations between revolutionary Shiite Iran and the conservative Sunni Saudi Kingdom have been strained by differences over regional security and other issues.

Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal said in Washington on Thursday that the kingdom was concerned about Iran's military build-up in the Gulf.

He was responding to U.S. reports that Iran has been building up its military for four months on Abu Musa and other Gulf islands near the Strait of Hormuz, which Washington saw as primarily defensive and no immediate cause for concern.

Mr. Velayati said Iran would not back down from its claim to Abu Musa and other Gulf islands at the centre of a sovereignty row with the United Arab Emirates.

"The foreign minister made it clear that the islands belonged to Iran and would remain so," IRNA said. "He said the case could be solved through negotiations."

The UAE has suggested taking the dispute over Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunb islands to the International Court of Justice.

Iran said Mr. Velayati "believed that foreign hands were behind UAE's claim to the islands and its threats to take the issue to an international court." It did not elaborate.

Mr. Velayati was also quoted by IRNA as saying that the nuclear arms race in the Middle East could spark global war.

Tehran denies Western reports that it is seeking to acquire nuclear arms and says the nuclear threat in the Middle East comes from Israel, widely believed to have a nuclear arsenal.

"Velayati commented that any kind of irrational act in this sensitive region could quickly lead to the break-out of another world war," IRNA reported.

"Countries and regimes possessing nuclear arms should be dealt with seriously by the international community."

"In case a rivalry emerges in the region for acquiring nuclear weapons, peace and security in the Middle East would be seriously threatened which would end

only in the ruin of the region as well as the whole world," it quoted Mr. Velayati as saying.

Iranian officials have criticised Israel for not joining the non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), up for renewal next month.

Iran has said it will sign the NPT again even if the Jewish state does not join.

In the wide-ranging interview Mr. Velayati said that Iran would not normalise ties with countries which supported British author Salman Rushdie, under a death order by Tehran for alleged blasphemy.

IRNA quoted Mr. Velayati as saying that the support of Western countries for Mr. Rushdie was "fueling hatred" of Muslim states and ruining the West's chances of having friendly ties with them.

IRNA said Mr. Velayati was responding to remarks by Britain's Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd that London would not normalise relations with Iran as long as it refused to change its stand on Rushdie.

"The foreign minister stressed that the situation was exactly vice versa," IRNA said. "He reaffirmed that Iran would never look at countries who support persons who insult Islam and the sanctities of the Muslims, and that such countries stand to lose their chance of improving ties not only with Iran but with other Islamic states as well."

'Arafat gave Iraqi message to Israel'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — PLO chief Yasser Arafat has passed on to Israel a message from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein saying Baghdad wants to forge ties with the Jewish state, Israeli military radio said Sunday.

Mr. Arafat gave the verbal message to Police Minister Moshe Shahal when they met last Wednesday in the Gaza Strip, the radio said.

Mr. Hussein said through Mr. Arafat that Iraq wanted to improve its relations with Israel following the signature of the Israeli-PLO autonomy accords, the radio added.

A spokesman for Mr. Shahal, who is of Iraqi origin, told AFP that Mr. Arafat said he had received the Iraqi president's best wishes to mark the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The spokesman would not say whether Mr. Hussein's message contained any reference to possible contacts with Israel.

Israel has made several attempts to establish contacts with Israel in past months,

the radio said.

Mr. Hussein wants the Jewish state to use its influence with the United States to secure a lifting of crippling international sanctions imposed on Baghdad after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, it said.

Israeli leaders have officially ruled out any dialogue with Baghdad and say they support Washington's "firm stand" against Iraq and Iran.

According to press reports however they believe the U.S. should be much tougher on Iran — which Israel sees as its enemy number one — than on Iraq.

Israeli President Ezer Weizman, Housing Minister Benjamin Ben Eliezer and Mr. Shahal said last year that they favoured contacts with Iraq, "a regional power which must be taken into account," in order to oppose Iran.

Ben Eliezer, like Mr. Shahal, is of Iraqi origin.

Israel has denied it is seeking contacts with the Jewish state.

'Fighting breaks out in S. Iraq'

NICOSIA (AFP) — Fighting has erupted in southern Iraq between the army and Shiite forces, the Iraqi opposition said Sunday.

The clashes broke out Saturday in the Qurnah region at the intersection of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, said the Iraqi National Congress (INC), a coalition of groups opposed to Baghdad.

Qurnah is located in Iraq's southern marshlands, 400 kilometres southeast of Baghdad, where Shiite opposition groups have been hiding since an abortive uprising against Baghdad in March 1991, a month after the Gulf war.

Opposition radio said Saturday fighting was taking place between the 3rd army corps and rebel forces in southern Iraq.

The Iraqi airforce cannot fly over southern Iraq as U.S., British and French warplanes have been enforcing an air exclusion zone over

this area since 1992.

Washington, London and Paris say the no-fly zone is aimed at protecting the Shiite population in the region from the Baghdad regime.

The INC reported "fierce battles" in the same region on Feb. 12 which forced the Iraqi army to withdraw.

The opposition coalition has also accused the Iraqi army of shelling towns in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq in recent days including the main town of Erbil.

Kurdish groups say Baghdad is massing thousands of Iraqi soldiers on the edge of the safe haven, which has been controlled by Kurds in defiance of Baghdad and with allied protection since an uprising after the Gulf war.

However, an Iraqi military official in Baghdad denied government troops were moving towards the Kurdish region or bombarding towns there.

Wahdat says Rabbani, not the Taliban, threatens Kabul Shi'ites

KABUL (AFP) — The leader of the opposition Shiite faction based in southwest Kabul said Sunday the forces of Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani were more of a military threat to them than the militant Taliban movement.

"We have received reports that (pro-Rabbani forces) are bracing to attack us, but we have no concern about the Taliban," Shiite leader Abdul Ali Mazari told AFP.

Mazari alleged that large tracts of southwest Kabul controlled by his Hezb-Wahdat faction "have become deserted because of harassment fire from pro-Rabbani forces based on the city-centre mountain peaks."

He expressed confidence in the readiness of his men, who he said were backed up by "more than 1,000" Uzbek fighters and another 700 Shiites from a former rival faction which had defected to Wahdat.

"We are fully prepared for any fighting, no shortages exist," declared Mazari.

He denied that the recent Kabul defeat of his Hezb-I-Islami allies — whose former Charayab headquarters 25 kilometres (15 miles) south-

east of Kabul is now occupied by the Taliban — had weakened their anti-Rabbani alliance.

"There is no change in the balance of power in Kabul," asserted Mazari.

He claimed the Taliban have replaced Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-I-Islami as a challenge to Rabbani's military chief, ex-defence minister Ahmad Masoud.

"The Taliban don't want to fight us until they have sorted out Masoud," said Mazari. "We are not a priority for the Taliban."

But Mazari stressed that hostilities between Wahdat and pro-Rabbani forces would not cease until "our people are given a 25 per cent share" in both the government and the state's armed forces.

"If Rabbani gives us our 25 per cent share then we will sit for negotiations and seek ways to legitimise his government," said Mazari.

Similarly, Mazari's response to Taliban demands that Wahdat, along with all other factions, surrender their weapons, was that this was impossible unless the fair share was granted in a future Afghan government.

Algeria: 6,388 civilians killed in 1994

TUNIS (R) — Algeria said Saturday that 6,388 civilians were killed in 1994 by "terrorists" — the official Algerian term for Muslim fundamentalists.

Among the civilians killed last year were 61 foreigners, the Algerian news agency APS said, quoting the first official toll of civilian casualties to be compiled by security forces.

Another 2,289 civilians were wounded, including 11 foreigners.

Among the dead were 21 journalists, 682 civil servants, 101 teachers, 2,207 workers, 1,384 unemployed, seven senior officials, the leaders of two political parties, three members of the government-appointed quasi-parliament, 15 magistrates, 31 prison warders, 52 imams, one singer, and one wali (governor).

Scores more people have been killed in the first two months of this year. They

included at least 42 officially acknowledged victims of a car bomb attack in central Algiers in January. Diplomats said the death toll from this was possibly more than 100 — many of the dead being civilians.

At least another five Algerian journalists have been killed this year and at least one other foreigner, a French trader.

In September last year, Abdul Hamid Mehri, head of the National Liberation Front, said Algerian President Liamine Zeroual had spoken of 10,000 being killed since armed Muslim groups started fighting the army-backed government in January 1992.

It was not clear whether the figure given by Mehri included casualties among the security forces who bore the brunt of early attacks by fundamentalists.

Western estimates say at least 30,000 people have been killed during the three years of civil strife which started when the authorities in January 1992 scrapped a general election that fundamentalists were poised to win.

Last month, an official statement reported that Muslim guerrillas perpetrated a total of 2,725 acts of sabotage in 1994. The sabotages affected mainly transport, education and electricity, the authorities said.

APS also reported Saturday that government troops had killed 28 Muslim militants in clashes across the country over the last four days.

The agency said one of them was a known militant leader killed in the eastern town of Annaba who had fought with Afghan Mujahideen. It did not name him or give further details.

'Militants ousted from Egyptian schools'

CAIRO (AFP) — Muslim militants have lost their grip on Egyptian schools after more than 1,000 teachers were removed from their posts in the past two years, Education Minister Hussein Kamel Bahaa Al Din said Sunday.

He told the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat that only a few hundred militant teachers were still working in Egyptian schools.

"Within five years the phenomenon of fundamentalism will have disappeared from the Egyptian school system," he pledged.

In December he announced that more than 1,000 militant teachers and administrators had been moved since the beginning of 1993 to less influential administrative posts as government employees cannot be fired.

He vowed Sunday to remove "10,000 more" if necessary.

Muslim militants launched a blood campaign to topple the government of President Hosni Mubarak in March 1992. Since then more than 670 people have died.

Mr. Bahaa Al Din told Al Hayat that the militants had "worked for a long-time without any resistance, but the (government's) open challenge to them repelled a large portion and now they are rethinking their positions."

He said moving the teachers had been an "emergency procedure" in the war against the militants, and added the education ministry was looking at other ways of combatting militancy.

Militant books would be purged from lessons, the emphasis on rote learning would be reduced and "participation and democracy" would be promoted among students, he said.

For the past year the minister has been in a tug-of-war with Islamic power centres in school bodies.

In September he was forced under militant pressure to back down from a decision requiring girls to have written permission from their parents to wear veils in school. In the past, Islamic administrators have forced schoolgirls to don the veil.

Teachers have been accused of distributing hooks and tapes promoting the militant cause and pressure from Islamists has led to a ban on books by secular writers, such as Egyptian Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz.

Mr. Bahaa Al Din's campaign has made him a regular target for the Islamic press, which accuses him of "attacking religion."

Arab League turns 50 and bankrupt

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — As the Arab League prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary this month, it also is grappling with deepening financial problems.

The 22-member league is trying to collect some \$98 million in arrears in membership fees, some past-due for a decade, according to one league official. There is an additional \$221 million shortfall for its 15 satellite organisations, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"If the arrears go on, many activities will be stopped or frozen," a senior league official told the Associated Press last week. He also insisted his name not be used.

Employees have com-

plained that they received their January wages late and still haven't been paid for February.

The league, formed in March 1945 and headquartered in Cairo, was designed to coordinate economic, political and social activities among Arab states.

But it has been badly split since the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and efforts to heal the rift have failed. There also are deep divisions over steps by some Arab states to make peace with Israel.

The league plans an anniversary party on March 22 to coincide with a meeting of member states' foreign ministers.

The ministers will be asked to deal with the budget prob-

lems as well as discuss an Egyptian proposal for a treaty banning weapons of mass destruction from the region.

The league's financial affairs committee held four days of meetings last week to work on the financial problems, but its recommendations were not made public.

Among the countries believed to be in arrears are Iraq, Yemen and Somalia, all of which have been torn in recent years by war.

Committee member Mohammad Al Sayed told Egypt's Middle East News Agency last week that the committee had approved a \$27 million operating budget for 1995-96 as well as the percentage each member state must pay.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
17:30	Le Prince El La Sirene
17:30	Le Prince El La Sirene
18:00	Marion N2
19:00	News In French
19:15	Cartoon De Notes
19:30	The Bold and the Beautiful
20:30	South Beach
21:00	News in English
22:30	Scarlet and Black
PRAYER TIMES	
04:37	Fajr
05:54	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:47	Dhuhr
15:06	Asr
17:48	Maghrib
18:57	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church, Sweidh, Tel. 810740	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623666	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623631	
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 636543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Armenian International Church Tel. 625256	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684193	
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
Temperatures are expected to drop slightly with a chance of showers in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom. Skies will be partly cloudy and winds westerly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm, with winds northerly moderate and seas calm.	
Min./Max. temp.	
Amman	8/18
Aqaba	14/27
Deserts	6/20
Jordan Valley	12/25
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 21, Aqaba 31 Humidity readings: Amman 28 per cent, Aqaba 22 per cent.	

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:	
Dr. Ghaleb Zaidan	736011
Dr. Hisham Kan'an	790286
Dr. Jamal Jbara	847351
Dr. Walid Al Mami	675483
First pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asena pharmacy	675035
Nairoukh pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Nairoukh pharmacy	623672
Najib pharmacy	847632
IRBID:	
Dr. Mohamed Ali Khalil	273099
Alquds pharmacy	(—)
ZARQA:	
Dr. Ghassan Al Faraj	906130
Khalil pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate	Rescue
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Price Complaints	602800
Hot Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage	Complaints
Amman Municipality	874767
Complaints	787111
Telephone Information	(directory assistance)
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone	Repairs
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power	Company
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport	08-53200

HOSPITALS

Jabal Amman Maternity	642441/2
Malhees, J. Amman	642362
Palestine, Shmeisani	641714
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	848845
Al-Musabir Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/3
Al-Ahl, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	775111/26
Army, Marja	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674155
ZARQA:	
Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)399150
URBID:	
Princess Beama Hospital	(02)755555
St. George Catholic Hospital	(02)727275
St. Al Nafesa Hospital	(02)747100
QAQA:	

Home News

Abdul Wahab Al Bayati: Painful quest for answers

By Ian Atalla
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — At the venerable age of 69, he has already been hailed for decades as one of the Arab World's most successful living poets, and at Al Finiq, the local coffeehouse where he usually passes his evenings, he often draws a large group of admirers to his table.

Nonetheless, during the past five years he has spent in Amman, and as has always been the case for him in every other country and city he has lived in, something unknown and most likely unknowable has been missing for Abdul Wahab Al Bayati.

"I feel a strange sense of loss, of banishment, wherever I go. And the only means to conquer this feeling," he added wryly, tongue-in-cheek, "are sleep and drinking."

The irony is that if one day this melancholy were to leave him, and his life were to become truly blissful, without worry or regret, it is highly doubtful that Bayati would welcome it.

"On the day," he is convinced, "my ability to write poetry would dry up completely."

A portion of Bayati's verses, which span 45 years and over 20 published volumes, do express a sort of transient serenity. But the majority, however, are filled with a seething sense of loss and struggle. So too, the cryptic metaphors which Bayati habitually arrays throughout his poems can be light in mood, but they often drop abruptly into much darker zones: the dead sun rises over rotting, putrid lands and cities suffocated by social repression, dead women come out of their graves to haunt their lovers. A man receives a gift from heaven — a miraculous gazelle. Out of his love for the animal, he sets it free to run — only to see it hunted down and skinned alive by a hateful, sadistic mob. "Don't approach. It is forbidden," the man cries out to the reader later on. "If you love in this land, the law will convict you of madness."

Bayati, a calm and quiet-mannered septagenarian with a slightly professorial mein, presents the observer with a striking contrast to the psychologically violent atmosphere which is so



Abdul Wahab Al Bayati

frequent in his writings. The darker emotions which humanity experiences, in particular loss and loneliness, neither afflict nor obsess him, he says. They are, quite simply, inescapable and essential ingredients which are necessary for his work.

"Man is born a stranger — he never chooses his fate, his nationality, his language or his poverty which often hangs over his head," Bayati said. And the paradox for the poet, as Bayati sees it, is that without a preoccupation with these more tragic aspects of life, and a sense, "of suffering, of estrangement," all his efforts would amount to naught. "His emotions would be placid, static — and therefore, his poetry would be so as well."

Although Bayati discounts himself as a politically-oriented writer, he has crossed that line on a number of occasions throughout the years. In 1953, while he was living in his native Iraq, some of his poetry and prose writings were deemed subversive enough to land him in jail. Two years later, official anger over a new volume of his poetry, entitled Broken Pitchers, caused him to flee the country.

One of Bayati's most scathing socio-political poems was written on the heels of the utter defeat which Arab armies suffered at the hands of Israeli forces in the June 1967 war. It was entitled simply *Letter For The June Sun*. "We are half men in the garbage dumps of history," Bayati wrote of the humiliated Arab nation, now left only with "peacocks who strut in the halls where pride is dead, and the essays of obedient hacks..."

I just don't believe in most politicians," said Bayati when asked to explain what would

drive him to write such damning verses. "They are spoiled eggs — negativists who sell and buy words and promises."

Bayati's curious alternative to such rulers and statesmen is to have "a world ruled over by writers. I believe they have the highest qualifications for governing."

One of the most famous riddles of Bayati's work is "Aisha," an elusive female entity who possesses infinite masks and disguises. Bayati urgently pursues her throughout many of his poems, knowing full well that every time he does so, she will vanish in the end.

"I've been asked 'who is Aisha?' hundreds of times," said Bayati. In the beginning, he replied, it had been simple enough — one of the first-ever crushes of his youth had been on a girl of that same name.

But then, with the passage of the years, and the outpouring of the various lines and tracks of his poems, Aisha gradually grew, shifted shape, and became something much more expansive.

Now, almost half a century later, she has gradually evolved into "a symbol of the past, the present, and the future — the unity of creation and existence itself," said Bayati. "I stem my life from her, and I would feel that my days were coming to a close if I stopped to think of her."

Although his explanation was a bit tinged with melodrama, Bayati's words did not seem so entirely out of place or step for a writer so drawn by the pyrotechnics of human angst in all of his works, and so instinctively adverse to any sense of calm or stillness within them.

Twenty-seven years earlier, a younger Bayati had written down how at the time, he had been spending his days in an endless "climate full of tension, anxiety and waiting ... to build up this spark, this hope, this threat of smoke with which I write my poems..."

Bayati's pen, ever restless, had pushed onwards: "Here I am searching in this great crowd ... for the ... hero who can change this holy mud and this straw into flame ... into revolution."



His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan (above) receive well-wishers on Thursday, the first day of the 'Eid and (left) Her Majesty Queen Noor presents a child with a toy during her visit to the SOS village in Tabarbour.

'Eid holiday ends; business resumes

AMMAN (J.T.) — Government departments, public institutions and schools resume work today following a four-day holiday in observance of the 'Eid Al Fitr that marked the end of Ramadan fasting.

Feast prayers on 'Eid Al Fitr Thursday were held in all mosques around the Kingdom. His Majesty King Hussein attended prayers at Al Hashemiyah mosque at the Royal Palaces. Accompanied by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Princes Abdullah, Faisal and Ali together with other members of the Royal Family and senior government officials, the King listened to the feast

sermon by Dr. Ahmad Helal, the Palace imam. After the prayers, the King and Prince Hassan and other members of the Royal Family visited the tombs of King Abdullah, King Talal and Queen Zein Al Sharaf. Also during the first 'Eid day, King Hussein and Prince Hassan received well-wishers at Raghadan Palace.

Her Majesty Queen Noor exchanged congratulations and best wishes with Minister of Planning, Rima Khalaf, Minister of Social Development, Salwa Daman-Masri and 50 representatives of the General Federation for Women, the Business and Professional Women's Club, and of different government rates.

The Queen spent the 'Eid morning with the orphans of the SOS Village in Tabarbour and the teenagers from the Boys and Girls Youth Houses in Wadi Seer and Sweifich.

Parliamentary committee visits Swaga: members satisfied with prison conditions

AMMAN (J.T.) — A parliamentary committee led by Lower House Speaker Sa'ad Srour visited Swaga prison south of Amman on the first day of Eid Al Fitr and, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, the committee members had excellent impressions about the treatment of prisoners.

Accompanied by Interior Minister Salameh Hamad and other Ministry of Interior officials the members of the committee inspected the different sections of the prison and talked with the prisoners, who, according to Petra, expressed total satisfaction with the services offered to them and the vocational training they receive.

Speaker Srour said after the visit that what he and his

colleagues had seen at the prison was a testimony of a unique and model treatment that could only be available in prisons in advanced nations.

"The prisoners receive good treatment and vocational training so that they would become very useful citizens later on," Mr. Srour said. He added that all the prisoners at the jailhouse were convicted who were sentenced by the courts and that they received good care by the prison authorities.

The committee was formed after a delegation from the Islamic Action Front (IAF) failed to visit the prison in January. The IAF complained at Parliament, accusing the Ministry of Interior of blocking the visit. They also

said, at the time, that political prisoners were held there.

Member of Parliament Khalil Haddadin, commenting on the visit told Petra: "What we have seen gives cause for satisfaction and is a source of pride for Jordan."

"We have met several prisoners and listened to their views concerning the treatment and services offered them as well as the vocational training which they said was helping them to adjust to the needs of future life," Mr. Haddadin, an Amman deputy and member of the Jordanian Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, said.

Mohammad Oweidah of the IAF said the committee came away with different impressions from earlier ones that prisoners were mis-

treated.

"We have now ascertained that the prisoners are all satisfied, that none underwent torture and only violators of prison rules receive punishments like similar cases in all other prisons around the world," he said.

Before touring of the prison's different sections, the committee was briefed by prison director Colonel Hassan Smadi. Col. Smadi outlined the various services the prison offered including vocational training courses. Col. Smadi noted that the prison has two wood workshops, one leather workshop, a large laundry and a large farm for raising sheep.

The Public Security Department (PSD) and a number of government institu-

tions make use of the services provided by the prisoners.

The Ministry of Education buys 30 per cent of the woodwork, like students desks, Col. Smadi said. He added that a certain percentage of the income from the sale goes to the prisoners or to their families. According to Col. Smadi the prisoners are provided with medical services and have access to a library where they can read books and newspapers.

Another IAF deputy, Hamzeh Mansour, said that parliament would continue to support the government drive to combat crime. He said that the committee made the visit just to ensure the prisoners were humanely treated and came away reassured about that.

Tawfik Tabba'a, 74

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prominent Jordanian businessman Tawfik Mohammad Sahri Tabba'a passed away Friday at the age of 74.

During a long public career, Mr. Tabba'a served as chairman of Royal Jordanian (RJ), deputy chairman of the Amman Chamber of Commerce, member of the board of directors of the Central Bank of Jordan and the Jordan Cement Factories Company.

His Majesty King Hussein delegated His Royal High-

ness Prince Ali Ben Nayef, the King's private secretary, to take part in the funeral of Mr. Tabba'a and convey his condolences to the Tabba'a family.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan delegated his advisor Mohammad Saqqaf, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad delegated the director of the Amman Police Department, while Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker delegated Sharif Fawaz Ben Abdullah to attend the funeral.

Rau due March 18

AMMAN — Dr. Johannes Rau, minister-president of the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia is expected here on a two-day visit March 18, the German embassy has announced.

Dr. Rau, who will be touring the region, will first visit Israel then Syria before coming to Jordan, according to embassy Charge d'Affaires Michael Bock.

Mr. Bock told the Jordan Times that Dr. Rau will be accompanied by an 80-member delegation including industrialists, government officials and journalists.

He said Dr. Rau would be



Johannes Rau meeting His Majesty King Hussein and Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker.

EU-sponsored 'peace process networks' conference begins in Petra today

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN (J.T.) — A European Union (EU)-organised conference on "peace process networks" begins in the southern ancient city of Petra today to assess several EU programmes aimed at creating networks of cooperation between Europe and countries involved in the multilateral phase of the Middle East peace talks.

The three-day conference will also work to consolidate links that have been established among participants in three EU-financed programmes that started last year and have been approved for this year as well.

Peace-Media programme

coordinator Trevor Mostyn told the Jordan Times that the conference will hold workshops to discuss the Peace-Media, Peace Campus and Peace-URBS programmes which the European Commission launched in 1993 to encourage cooperation among professionals in the EU and Mediterranean non-member countries involved in the multilateral talks.

"The conference will allow for cross-fertilisation among the three EU programmes," Mr. Mostyn said.

In addition to soliciting ideas from the participants on how the programmes could be developed, the Petra meeting will also discuss the peace process and how it is progressing, he

said. The Peace Media programme involves professional journalists in the participating countries while Peace Campus aims at encouraging cooperation among university students. The Peace URBS programme seeks to create networks of cooperation among towns. The EU has been actively involved in the multilateral phase of the Arab-Israeli talks though its role in the bilateral negotiations has been limited.

Stressing that the programmes do not aim to influence the participants' political or social views, Mr. Mostyn says they merely aim to bring professionals together as colleagues.

23 killed, 145 injured during holiday

By Ahmad Kreishan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Twenty three people were killed and 145 injured in road and various accidents in the Kingdom during 'Eid Al Fitr holiday.

Reports from the Public Security Department, the Civil Defence Department and local hospitals said the incidents included 18 fires, four murders (two by gunshots and two by stabbing), five food poisoning cases, 10 suffocations and three drownings.

But according to the reports road accidents had

the lion's share of the toll.

In one road tragedy a whole family of six persons died when their private car was overrun by a semi-trailer on the Zarqa-Jerash road. The dead were 48-year-old retired army Colonel Ahmad Khawaldeh, his wife Amal, and his children Tareq, 13, Laith, 7, Mohammad 10 and Hamdi 4. The driver of the semi-trailer with a Saudi licence plate escaped unharm.

In another road accident on the Reahmeh-Aqaba highway four people were killed and five others injured in a collision between

a private vehicle and a truck owned by the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company. The dead were Ali Subeimat 65, Hafizah Saleh 60, Mirvet Hassan 19 and Ghadah Bayadiah, 25.

A bus overturned while on its way from Hasa to Karak in southern Jordan injuring 18 passengers who were taken to Karak Government Hospital for treatment.

In Qweismeh near Amman, 10 people suffered mass suffocation due to a gas leakage from an oven. All were treated at Al Bashir Hospital.

Arafat

(Continued from page 12)

Mr. Peres was quoted from an interview with the German Der Spiegel magazine.

His comments "indicate a clear retreat from the commitments made in the (peace agreement), interference in internal Palestinian affairs and a disregard for the timetables that were agreed on," the Palestinian statement said.

Palestinian sources said the cabinet also decided to assert more authority in the West Bank, despite the delay in implementing autonomy there.

Egypt police arrest 7

(Continued from page 1)

a campaign in late 1992 to gradually take control of the 140,000 privately-owned mosques in Egypt to "prevent fundamentalists from using them as podiums for propagating extremist ideas."

Government-appointed imams must submit the text of their Friday prayer sermons for ministry approval.

In 1993 and 1994, the state seized 10,000 mosques,

according to the ministry. Mosques administered by the government lock their doors after the last prayer of the day, an hour and a half after sunset, until the dawn prayer the next day. The lock-down aims at preventing Islamic militants from taking refuge in the mosques, which commonly serve as meeting places in poor neighbourhoods.

Save water every drop counts!

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

FILMS

★ Film entitled "Leonardo Da Vinci: the Visionary Intellect" (with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Khalid Khreis) at Darat Al Funun at 5:30 p.m.

★ Film entitled "Atlas De Mariposas" at Instituto Cervantes (the Spanish Cultural Centre) at 4:30 p.m.

EXHIBITION

★ "Young America" exhibit (with photographs featuring Americans of all ages) at the American Centre.

OBITUARY

The TABBA'A family mourns the sad loss of their beloved

HAJ TEWFIK TABBA'A

who passed away Friday, March 3, 1995 in Amman.

The deceased was laid to rest at the family cemetery in Um Al Heeran.

Condolences will be received at his family's residence in Jabal Amman — Zahran Street 5th Circle, until Tuesday evening.

MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE

4 World News

Salinas satisfied his demands had been met Deeply divided, Mexican ruling party marks 66th anniversary

MEXICO CITY (Agencies) — Former President Carlos Salinas De Gortari did not impede an investigation into a presidential candidate's assassination last year, the attorney general announced Saturday.

Mr. Salinas ended an on-again, off-again fast, saying he was satisfied his demands had been met.

Attorney General Antonio Lozano Gracia, in a news conference, presented letters from two former investigators stating that Mr. Salinas had not blocked the probe into the fatal shooting of Luis Donaldo Colosio.

"During my labours as assistant prosecutor, then President Carlos Salinas De Gortari never interfered with my investigation," wrote former investigator Olga Islas.

Mr. Salinas fasted briefly this past week after the arrest of his brother, Raul, in connection with the Sept. 28 murder of Ruiz Massieu. The former president said he would go without food until officials made clear he had not interfered with the investigation into the March 23, 1994, assassination of Mr. Colosio — and stop blaming him for the peso's slide.

He ended the fast Saturday, the Mexican News Agency, Notimes, reported.

Meanwhile, President Ernesto Zedillo exhorted loyalists of the ruling party to reshape the party as they've reshaped the nation.

"You don't build new democracy by destroying the PRI," Mr. Zedillo told 2,000 supporters at a 66th-anniversary ceremony at party headquarters in Mexico City.

But deepening internal divisions have taken their toll on the PRI, already shaken by a lingering Indian insurgency in Chiapas, two high-level assassinations and the peso's tumble.

Mr. Zedillo told loyalists that the PRI has suffered under "attacks" that were not its doing. He said members remain united.

Many Mexicans scoff at such claims.

"Give me a break that the PRI has been attacked," said Osvaldo Uriarte, a taxi driver. "The PRI is the one most to blame for what's going on here."

Later Saturday, thousands of Mexicans marched in a peaceful demonstration against the government and the ruling party. They said

Salinas should be prosecuted for his role in the economic crisis.

"Salinas, give back the money" demonstrators chanted.

The devaluation of the peso began on Dec. 20, shortly after Mr. Salinas ended a six-year term.

Demonstrators millions of poorer Mexicans.

"The PRI is weak," said Superbarrio, a caped social activist in red mask and wrestler's tights who champions causes of the urban poor. "The people are marching in the other direction."

The leader of the Zapatista National Liberation Army, Subcomandante Marcos, issued a communique Saturday expressing concern that the political chaos could hurt peace prospects in Chiapas because of uncertainty about who is in control of the government.

"We are disposed for a dialogue for a definitive solution to the conflict," Marcos wrote. "But we can't be talking to one part of the government while the other part pursues and attacks us."

Meanwhile, a former Mexican prosecutor who faced accusations this week of a cover-up in the probe he headed into the murder of his brother, a top politician, was arrested Friday in the United States for violating U.S. customs laws.

"He was arrested for failure to declare currency," U.S. Customs Service spokesman Steve Duschene said. "Mr. Mario Ruiz Massieu declared \$18,000 but a customs inspection found that he possessed \$46,000 worth of U.S. and Mexican currency."

He was arrested at New Jersey's Newark International Airport.

Under U.S. law, all people entering or leaving the country must declare currency in excess of \$10,000.

Mr. Duschene said Mr. Ruiz Massieu is being held by U.S. Customs in New Jersey and will be arraigned Monday. If convicted, he could receive up to five years in prison, a fine of up to \$250,000 or both.

Mr. Ruiz Massieu left Mexico Thursday after a six-hour grilling in the attorney general's office, where he defended himself from accusations he had covered up the alleged role of Mr. Salinas brother, Raul, in the murder of his own brother, Francisco.

In a statement Friday, Mr. Mario Ruiz Massieu said he had left Mexico after the interrogation Thursday for speaking engagements at U.S. universities, denying newspaper reports that he had fled the country.

Endeavour telescopes trained on Sagittarius

SPACE CENTRE, Houston (AP) Astronauts trained Endeavour's telescopes on the constellation Sagittarius early Sunday to help astronomers understand the interaction between two stars in orbit around one another.

The so-called Symbiotic Binary Star Systems are composed of a White Dwarf, which is small and dim, and a Red Giant, which is large and bright. The two stars orbit each other only about as far apart as the earth and sun — close enough that they are believed to exchange gases as the hot White Dwarf irradiates the cooler Red Giant.

The Binary Star in Sagittarius was one of two such objects studied by the shuttle's three ultraviolet telescopes early Sunday. Two of Endeavour's seven astronauts are taking turns pointing the \$200 million instruments as the crew and controllers on the ground conduct observations around the clock.

On Saturday, the telescopes zoomed in on a quasar while hunting for astronomers' main quarry during the 15-day flight — intergalactic helium that might or might not exist.

The quasar, some 10 billion light years away, is thought to be the size of several billion solar masses all collapsed into one giant black hole. This suspected black hole is sucking up everything around it and emitting considerable ultraviolet light.

By using the quasar as a



Space Shuttle Endeavour payload specialist Sam Durrance (left) and mission specialist Wendy Lawrence stand in front of launch complex 39-A before the service structure is moved away from the shuttle. Durrance, Lawrence along with five other crewmembers flew Endeavour into orbit early Thursday on a planned fifteen-day mission (AFP photo)

light bulb, astronomers should be able to detect whether anything is blocking that ultraviolet light on its way to Earth. The obstructing material could be intergalactic helium, an important missing link in the big bang theory.

Astronomers believe the immense explosion that started the universe spread hydrogen gas and much less helium gas between galaxies.

One of the shuttle telescopes is to spy on the quasar periodically until the mission ends on March 17. Johns Hopkins University scientist Arthur Davidson said two glimpses Saturday didn't yield an answer.

"We literally won't have enough information until we've done this a half-dozen times," Mr. Davidson said.

N.Korea renews demand for peace accord

TOKYO (AFP) — North Korea renewed demands Sunday for the present armistice on the Korean peninsula to be replaced with a peace accord.

The call was made by the government journal Minju Joson, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said in a dispatch monitored here.

"Establishment of a new peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula is an issue that can be settled only between the DPRK (North Korea) and the United States," the report said.

"It is the United States that signed the armistice agreement," Minju Joson said.

Minju Joson warned: "If

the United States and some of its followers create complex problems in this regard, we will have to take a relevant measure. We do not make an empty talk."

North Korea had repeatedly demanded a peace accord to replace the armistice agreement.

Washington, while saying a new accord is needed to replace the armistice, has rejected the North Korean demand for a bilateral treaty out of hand, saying South Korea must be involved in any new peace arrangement on the peninsula.

China too went on record last year as saying it believed that Seoul must be involved

Cambodian general killed in airplane crash

PHNOM PENH (AP) — The deputy commander of Cambodia's air force was killed when a light reconnaissance plane, he was piloting clipped some trees and crashed in central Cambodia, the government said Sunday.

Information Minister Ieng Mouly said Maj. Gen. Tes Chanthan was killed Saturday while flying an Italian-made P-29 aircraft with a colleague on a mission to provide security for co-Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

The prime minister was attending a meeting in Kompong Thom province, 140 kilometres.

The general died because he could not flee the aircraft after it exploded on hitting the ground. His colleague managed to run away from the wreck but sustained serious injuries.

Hong Kong picks between Democrats, pro-Beijing parties in local polls

HONG KONG (R) — With Hong Kong counting the months to China's 1997 takeover, polling took place across the British colony Sunday as residents voted in municipal council elections pitting Democrats against pro-Beijing supporters.

The election, with a wider voter franchise under Governor Chris Patten's democratic reforms in 1992, is among the last before the colony's return to China in less than two and a half years.

But with only hours to go before polls closed, voter turnout, though an improvement on previous municipal council elections in 1991, was dismal.

Municipal Councils, responsible for mundane duties like garbage collection and the cleaning of public toilets, form part of Hong Kong's three-tiered system of government put in place by Mr. Patten and which Beijing has pledged to dismantle.

By mid-afternoon after seven hours of polling, only 10.4 per cent of Hong Kong's 2.17 million registered voters had cast their votes.

In 1991 9.3 per cent of the 1.7 million registered voters turned out during the same period.

In Sau Mau Ping estate, Kowloon, political differences came to a head as three men engaged in a brawl outside a polling station.

Police said two DAB supporters were given outpatient treatment after they were attacked by a third man with an iron bar. All three have been questioned by police, said a police spokeswoman.

Voting began quietly early Sunday morning in 52 constituencies and ended 10:30 p.m. (1430 GMT).

In the new territories, less than 200 people had voted at

a polling station catering for 24 villages by midday.

"But we will do better than the new towns," said polling agent Chung Kwok-Wang.

Public and media reaction to the polls has been largely indifferent.

The two main players in the elections are the Democratic Party, invincible in the initial years after the crushing of the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising, and the pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB).

For both parties, the electoral fight is expected to serve as a run-up to more important polls in September when members of the Hong Kong Legislative Council will be picked.

Chinese officials, banks, businesses and welfare organisations have all been campaigning openly for candidates acceptable to China.

U.S. urges pressure on China over rights

GENEVA (AFP) — U.S. Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck was expected to arrive here Sunday to canvas support among delegates to the U.N. human rights commission for a resolution criticising China on its rights record, U.S. sources said.

Despite Beijing's protests, the European Union, backed by the United States and Japan has in recent years maintained a "no action motion" slamming "violations of fundamental freedoms" in China.

The motion also draws

attention to the "distinct identity" of Tibet, which China brought under its control in 1951, subsequently settling the country with its own ethnic Chinese. China has been widely accused of gross human rights violations in Tibet.

Although European delegates believe Beijing will again this year escape condemnation of its behaviour by the 53 member states of the U.N. rights commission, a U.S. spokesman told AFP this was by no means certain.

In the past three years, Beijing has escaped censure by invoking procedural points to ensure the U.N. commission does not vote on the actual resolution.

Delegates who drew up the motion have recognised recent "positive" developments in China but are still concerned at restrictions on public gatherings and restrictions of freedom of expression and religion.

Mr. Shattuck is to report on the commission's findings Tuesday or Wednesday after the vote.

Goddesses, mother figures are a poor example for Asian women

COLOMBO (AFP) — Rapists and wife beaters get away lightly in South Asia, where ironically women have a good record reaching the top as political leaders of traditionally male-dominated societies.

The region currently has three prime ministers who are women: Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan and Sirima Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka. And Chandrika Kumaratunga, is Asia's only female president.

But millions of their less fortunate sisters toiling in factories face higher risks of violence and continue to earn lower wages than male counterparts.

The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Radhika Coomaraswamy, said women political leaders at best maintained the status quo rather than actively worked towards gender equality.

"What is unique about South Asia is that it has produced the highest number of women heads of state and heads of government. But it has not helped the situation for women."

"It is the dynastic factor that put them in power. South Asian cultures accept women goddesses and worship mother figures so women at the top is acceptable. But otherwise they have no personal rights," Mr. Coomaraswamy said.

Women may be equal con-

stitutionally but various social laws erode that right, she said. Asian women are also afraid to report rape and other forms of sexual harassment because of the social stigma attached to victims.

In employment, 80 per cent of factory workers in Sri Lanka are women yet they have only 1 per cent of managerial jobs. The problems are acute in other professions too.

The trend is maintained in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Ms. Coomaraswamy said, adding that it was because of similar economic policies.

Sri Lanka's unique mother and daughter leaders are both widows propelled to power following the assassinations of their politician husbands. Similar tragedies made other Asian women assume power.

Whatever little women have achieved has been as a result of modernisation of society rather than due to conscious government policy, said Neelan Thiruchelvan, a Sri Lankan MP and constitutional lawyer.

He said women leaders were unable to address women's concerns because they were too pre-occupied with other pressing domestic issues affecting their impoverished constituencies.

The World Social Development Summit in Copenhagen from March 6 is likely to focus on poverty rather than women's issues although it would be a good opportunity

China's Li drops angry rhetoric on Hong Kong

BEIJING (R) — Premier Li Peng's annual call Sunday for Hong Kong's smooth return to Chinese sovereignty was remarkable for what it lacked — angry rhetoric accusing Britain of hindering the 1997 transition.

Calling the unification of Hong Kong and Taiwan with China "the general trend of our time" and a common aspiration, Mr. Li told the Communist-run parliament Beijing was working hard to accomplish both.

But in a sharp departure from the fiery rhetoric heard in his earlier state-of-the-union reports, Mr. Li merely appealed to Britain to uphold its bargain to ease Hong Kong's uneventful handover rather than blaming it for throwing up obstacles.

"We require that the British government conscientiously carry out the Sino-British Joint Declaration (governing Hong Kong's handover) and cooperate with the Chinese government to create the necessary conditions for a smooth transition and a smooth transfer of government in Hong Kong, and for long-term stability and prosperity in Hong Kong," Mr. Li said.

In last year's address, Mr. Li scorned London for the failure of marathon talks over British plans to legislate a broader measure of democracy in Hong Kong before the transition and pledged that China would take over "no matter what."

"British colonial rule in Hong Kong is coming to an end. No force can stop that," Mr. Li said bluntly last March 10.

This year Mr. Li blithely dismissed British influence in

the handover, saying a Beijing-appointed preparatory working committee had made advances "on all fronts" and vowing that China would oversee a principled transition.

He noted that Hong Kong's handover was precisely 849 days away — a number gleaming in red on a huge digital countdown clock directly across Tiananmen Square from the Great Hall of the People where he delivered his speech.

Mr. Li sent a more mixed message to Nationalist-ruled Taiwan, which China's Communists have regarded as a rebel province since the vanquished nationalists took refuge there in 1949.

Mr. Li urged Taipei to accept Communist Party chief Jiang Zemin's recent eight-point appeal for high-level negotiations to chart a course towards reunification with the mainland.

"We hope that the Taiwan authorities will set the overall interests of the nation above everything else, offer a positive response to Mr. Jiang's speech and act practically to promote exchange between the two sides and the reunification of the motherland," Mr. Lee said.

Mr. Li only alluded to Beijing's longstanding refusal to rule out the use of military force to recover the huge offshore island, which could be precipitated by formal moves towards secession.

"We resolutely oppose the notion, in any form, of 'two Chinas' or 'one China' one Taiwan", and also any attempt or action aimed at bringing about the independence of Taiwan," Mr. Li said.

Taiwan's president Lee

Teng-Hui was expected to respond formally to Mr. Jiang's appeal in an April meeting of Taiwan's National Unification Council.

Taiwan last month signalled an easing of the first tenet of its decades-old "three nos" policy towards China — no official contacts.

Taipei's Mainland Affairs Council said officials now would be allowed for the first time since 1949 to join negotiating teams from the quasi-official Straits Exchange Foundation in its dealings with its mainland counterpart, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait.

Previously, Taiwan officials had to give up their government jobs before joining the foundation.

Each side espouses eventual reunification, but on its own terms. Many rounds of quasi-official talks have yet to touch on reunification, although Beijing hopes they will lead in that direction.

Meanwhile, China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping did not appear at the opening of the annual session of parliament Sunday despite his election the day before to the presidency of the rubber stamp body.

However, Mr. Deng was mentioned in the opening address to the National People's Congress by Premier Li, who offered fulsome praise for the sweeping market-oriented economic reforms launched by Mr. Deng in 1978.

Mr. Li said the future of China depended on their successful implementation.

"In the work of the government this year, we should uphold Comrade Deng

Malian film wins top African film prize

OUAGADOUGOU — Malian director Oumar Sissoko's film Guimba about the throw of a tyrannical ruler won the main Ye Stallion Prize at the Film Festival in Faso. The film, which also won a prize for costume and set for its depiction of the ancient empire. The prize of first feature went to Kouyate of Burkina Faso. "Keita, De Bouche / le," (Keita, From My Ear) which tackles the conflict between tradition and modernity through tale of a boy distant school by a traditional singer and storyteller his family's village who es to the city to tell the origins of his name. The theme of this year's F Festival was "Cinema History," marking 100 since the Lumiere in Paris. In his acceptance speech, Kouyate paid age to Senegalese jury dent Ousmane Sembé whose 1963 film "Borromé" is widely viewed as first true African film. prize is a big symbol of coming from our living a tor Ousmane Sembé Kouyate said. Films west Africa won the prizes but several went to films from Maghreb, including the special prize for "A Recherche Du Man De Femme" (Looking For Wife's Husband). Other singled out were Egypt film Marjoud and the African film "Youcef Ou Legende Du Septieme I mant" (Youcef Or Legend Of The Seven Sleeper), which took away for best actress and best respectively, while Egypt film "Ahlam Saghira" best script.

Man jailed for getting intimate with a cow

HARARE (AFP) — A man who had sex with a cow because he was afraid of contracting AIDS from a partner has been jailed nine months by a Zimbabwe court, a press report said. Israel Zinhanga, 28, told court in the small town Rusape that he "felt" having sex with a cow in view of the AIDS epidemic. Sunday Times said in a report made available in the capital Mr. Zinhanga also said he was in love with the cow. He recited marriage vows court and pledged to be faithful to the animal during his jail sentence. Rusape magistrate Guvamombe described the case as "abominable" and said having sex with an animal which provided milk and meat for human consumption would endanger the health of the nation, the report said.

Party continues after Australia's Gay Mardi Gras

SYDNEY (AFP) — Thousands of beary-eyed revellers attended so-called recovery parties here Sunday after Sydney's rain-drenched 18th annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade. Pouring rain reduced spectator numbers to 150,000 from around 600,000 the previous year as divas and drag queens strutted on floats through the central Sydney gay centre of Oxford Street Saturday night. Some 220 police monitored the event but charged only four people, all for minor offences. Among the floats were a popemobile complete with pontiff, one of gay men masquerading as Chinese swimmers and another which featured 20 people dressed as Greek singer Nana Mouskouri draped over a satin bed. Organisers said around 5,000 international tourists, mostly from the United States, had travelled into Sydney for the parade. Floats featured participants from San Francisco, Hawaii and New Zealand. Some 19,000 party-goers followed the parade with a traditional gays and lesbians-only party at the central Sydney Showgrounds where they were entertained by British pop star Boy George. "I think the rain made it very poignant, the atmosphere was electric," said Rob Patmore, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras president. A group of Christians supported by Sydney moral campaigner Fred Nile, a state MP, held a prayer vigil during the parade, preaching to participants and praying for rain.

Berlusconi sets terms for backing Dini

ROME (R) — Italy's former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, under fire for rejecting an emergency budget vital for the survival of his successor, says he may reconsider in exchange for a promise of early elections.

The decision Friday by Mr. Berlusconi's Freedom Alliance to vote against Prime Minister Lamberto Dini's mini-budget, a dramatic reversal from an earlier pledge of conditional support, could sink the measure and force Mr. Dini to resign.

In an interview on a news programme of one of his three television networks on Saturday night, the media magnate offered what could be considered either an olive branch or an ultimatum.

"We are still willing to vote for this mini-budget if it is presented in a comprehensive framework, together with pensions reform in an economic programme," he said.

Mr. Berlusconi said such a programme would have to include the general outlines of the overall budget for 1996 and "lead to a government of the legislature."

His call for a "government of the legislature" was a demand for early elections to succeed Mr. Dini's "government of experts." It was formed in January with a limited mandate and is made up of technocrats from outside political parties.

Mr. Berlusconi, who was forced to step down in December after the Northern League withdrew from his government, has repeatedly demanded early elections for June. He says the current parliament no longer represents the will of the people.

Markets view the 20 trillion lire (\$12.3 billion) package as vital to restore some order to Italy's chaotic finances.



The leader of the National Alliance of Italy (left), leader of the Reformers Party (center) and "Forza Italia" leader Silvio Berlusconi talk to the media during a recent press conference (AFP photo)

Mr. Dini, who would almost certainly be forced to resign if it were defeated, has appealed to all parties to support the package, aimed at pulling the 1995 deficit back on target.

His government has a majority in the Senate, where the budget comes to a vote Tuesday. But it faces the spectre of defeat in the lower house, where it only won a confidence vote thanks to Freedom Alliance abstentions.

The shock decision to vote against the mini-budget sent the lira crashing against both the German mark and the U.S. dollar. Politicians, commentators, industrialists and union leaders nearly universally denounced it.

Rome's left-leaning La Repubblica flatly accused the Freedom Alliance of "sinking the lira." Budget Minister

Raniero Masera said the market turbulence battering the currency was eating away at the spending power of Italian families.

The centre-right Freedom Alliance had earlier promised to back Mr. Dini on the mini-budget and also on the contentious question of cost-cutting pension reform as long as the latter issue were settled by the end of March.

It did an about face when Mr. Dini told the Senate he intended to negotiate pension reform with unions, a move that could delay passage as well as the elections Mr. Berlusconi wants.

The surprise move by Mr. Berlusconi's alliance, led by his Forza Italia party, was widely seen as an attempt to force president Oscar Luigi Scalfaro's hand.

If the Dini government collapses, Mr. Scalfaro would

have little choice but to dissolve parliament four years ahead of schedule and call an election.

Ms. Berlusconi argues that only a general election can give Italy the stability it needs but opponents say tighter controls on media ownership are required for a fair election.

The stop-gap Dini, a former central banker, has said he will resign as soon as his four-point programme has been approved. He also has threatened to step down earlier if insurmountable obstacles littered his political path.

The mini-budget and pension reforms are two of the four points in Mr. Dini's limited programme. The others are preparing for regional elections in April and new regulations on the use of the media during electoral campaigns.

Inkatha decides to return to S. African parliament

ULUNDI, South Africa (R) — South Africa's main black opposition Inkatha Freedom Party stepped back from a political abyss Sunday, ordering its members to return to the parliament they quit two weeks ago.

But the mainly-Zulu party gave President Nelson Mandela a one month deadline over resolving a row on the constitution.

Inkatha officials said the party's three cabinet ministers, including Inkatha leader and Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi, would resume their government duties Monday.

A resolution passed at a crisis conference on the party's future by some 3,000 delegates said Inkatha would boycott a Constituent Assembly writing the country's definitive post-apartheid constitution unless there was

agreement on international mediation within a month. Parliament's lower house and Senate sit together in Cape Town to form the Constituent Assembly, but Inkatha is demanding international mediation over constitutional differences.

"Conference instructs (Inkatha) members in the national parliament and the cabinet to resume their attendance and duties in parliament," the resolution said.

"Conference considers, however, that if measures to implement international mediation are not taken in a month's time, (Inkatha) members of the Constitutional Assembly shall suspend participation in the Constitutional Assembly and any of its sub-structures..."

Mr. Buthelezi led his party out of parliament on Feb. 21

after accusing President Mandela and former President F.W. de Klerk of reneging on a mediation agreement that had drawn Inkatha into last year's all-race elections at the last minute.

Mr. Buthelezi wants a strong measure of provincial autonomy in the new South Africa and distrust Mr. Mandela and Mr. de Klerk. He also believes he will get a better deal from international mediators.

Mediators led by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington packed their bags and left last April when South African leaders failed to agree on their mediation terms.

The Inkatha parliamentary walkout had heightened fears of a surge in violence in the Zulu heartland of KwaZulu-

Natal, where thousands of people have died over the past decade in bitter wars between Inkatha and Mandela's ANC.

There are also fears that a break in South Africa's fragile unity could scare off foreign investors, whose money is needed to boost an economy battered by years of international sanctions and recession.

Police said three people had been killed and three wounded Saturday and early Sunday in violence in the Bhambuti squatter camp north of Durban. Bhambuti was one of the country's most violent areas in the run-up to last year's elections.

Police said they feared further violence when Inkatha supporters returned from the Uluend congress on Sunday night.

Japan's LDP marks 40th anniversary with new symbol

TOKYO (Agencies) — Japan's face, Japan's future, joyful family, jump fresh, justice freedom.

Take your pick, Japan's co-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Sunday told supporters as the party marked its 40th anniversary at a convention by unveiling the English acronym JF as its new symbol.

The LDP's choice of a moniker with no fixed meaning neatly if unintentionally symbolises the confusion of Japan's largest political party as it maps out its future in an era of shifting coalitions and crumbling political structures.

"Japan's politics are certainly changing," a bemused Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama told the LDP gathering at a posh Tokyo hotel ballroom. He wryly noted that he was the first Socialist Party leader ever to be invited to give an address to the conservative LDP.

Mr. Murayama, who became prime minister last June when his Socialists joined hands with the LDP and a small third party, pledged to keep the government intact and devote full energy to passing the 1995 state budget and overseeing the restoration of earthquake-battered Kobe.

"It is important that we do everything to make the three-party coalition stronger and more stable," Mr. Murayama told the LDP.

The prime minister, under fire for his government's sluggish handling of the Kobe earthquake and for a widening credit union scandal, won backing from the LDP, still the largest single party in Japan.

LDP leaders went out of their way to defend the coalition and attack the opposition, which was blamed for everything from the political turmoil of recent years to Japan's trade friction with the United States.

LDP President Yohei Kono, who also serves as foreign minister, said joining hands with the Socialists last year "as a bold decision necessary to restore order to a chaotic political situation."

To appease the Socialists, the LDP dropped from its platform its traditional call for Japan to rewrite its U.S.-imposed peace constitution.

An election schedule that includes nationwide local polls in April and parliamentary upper house contests in July has left the LDP reluctant to spell out policies for fear of alienating its coalition allies.

The absence of Mr. Clinton, leader of the world's only superpower who is facing a wave of isolationism and conservatism at home, is considered by some observers as a serious setback.

Mr. Somavia disagreed: "It is not significant. The U.S. is represented at a high level and the key thing is that the country is embarking on a discussion about these issues."

Denmark, expecting up to 20,000 visitors to the two conferences, is laying on an extravaganza of fireworks,

Poll shows Chirac would beat Balladur

French presidential race interferes with government

PARIS (R) — The increasingly bitter rivalry between neo-Gaullists Edouard Balladur and Jacques Chirac in France's presidential race is starting to interfere with the day-to-day running of the government.

After internal squabbling over who leaked word to the press about a Franco-American spying row, new controversy arose this weekend over the timing of an announcement that France was to close six embassies and 15 consulates abroad.

Prime Minister Balladur, in a letter Saturday to shocked French nationals abroad, wrote that there would be no closures despite a Foreign Ministry announcement to that effect. The foreign minister is top Chirac lieutenant Alain Juppe.

Mr. Balladur's aides said the announcement had been politically motivated, aimed at making the premier seem insensitive to France's prestige abroad.

Mr. Juppe's ministry said it had been ordered to cut 500 million francs (\$97.4 million) from its budget, which would also have forced it to scrap new plans to boost French culture abroad.

Mr. Balladur, moving fast to avoid damaging accusations he was failing to protect France's sacrosanct language and culture, wrote that, to

the contrary, he had instituted yet another programme to promote "la culture Française" overseas.

"The Foreign Ministry announcement has no foundation and its publication in the current (election) period does not seem based on reasons connected in any way with the proper running of government," Mr. Balladur wrote.

Socialist challenger Lionel Jospin delightedly leaped into the fray, saying he was "shocked to see the way the government was tearing itself apart with Mr. Balladur's cabinet literally exploding under our eyes."

Most ministers in Balladur's centre-right government back his presidential bid with the notable exception of Mr. Juppe and Culture Minister Jacques Toubon, also a Chirac ally.

Mr. Juppe had already accused Mr. Balladur last week of making "unstatesmanlike" accusations against Mr. Chirac when the premier said the Paris mayor's election platform would cost France huge sums to put into effect.

Political analysts said the infighting was tied to a tidal change in declared voting intentions for the April/May election.

Mr. Balladur was long favourite to win the two-round vote but three opinion polls last week showed Mr.

Chirac now in the lead.

The latest poll showed Mr. Chirac would defeat Mr. Balladur by 52 per cent to 48 per cent if the two Gaullists were to fight it out in a run-off on May 7.

Another poll showed Mr. Chirac winning by 59 per cent to 41 per cent, a month ago, a similar survey had showed Mr. Balladur beating Mr. Chirac 64-36.

Mr. Balladur's popularity has declined following a series of embarrassing problems including a wiretapping scandal and the Franco-American spying row.

The Chirac camp has accused Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, a key Balladur aide, of leaking the spy story, and baring Franco-American relations, merely to divert public attention from the wiretap issue.

Mr. Balladur said in a radio interview Saturday that since the government "has encountered difficulties in the past month, it's predictable that I feel the repercussions."

But he said at a rally later that he has "an unshakable desire to win."

The top two candidates in the first round April 23 move on to the second round May 7 unless one candidate wins an outright majority, which is highly unlikely.

According to the IFOP poll, Mr. Balladur would

beat Jospin 56-44 per cent in the event they are the finalists.

Mr. Chirac and Mr. Balladur both are members of the Gaullist rally for the republic party, founded by Mr. Chirac nearly 20 years ago. Their rivalry has split the conservatives, who romped to an overwhelming victory in legislative elections in 1993.

Unwilling to take on the political risk of becoming premier, a post he had already held twice, Mr. Chirac stood aside to allow Mr. Balladur to serve two years until this spring's presidential vote.

Mr. Balladur projects a staid, aloof image, uncomfortable in crowds or on television. But his image as a hardworking, dedicated administrator gained him wide popularity among many French, who consider Mr. Chirac a loose cannon who has used up his chances.

Mr. Chirac was defeated in the presidential elections by Socialist Francois Mitterrand in 1981 and 1988. Since January Mr. Chirac has played the campaigner, attending rallies and giving rousing speeches to raucous supporters. Television footage Saturday showed him smiling broadly and pressing the flesh with supporters the night before at a rally in Besancon, eastern France.

Gunmen kill top Hutu official in Rwanda

KIGALI (R) — Unidentified gunmen assassinated a senior Rwandan government official from the majority Hutu tribe south of the capital Kigali Saturday night, officials said.

The gunman shot dead Pierre-Claver Rwangabo, prefect of the main southern town of Butare and a key Hutu politician, and two other people with small arms.

Environment Minister Jean Npomucene Nanyiriza told Reuters Sunday.

He said Mr. Rwangabo and the two other unidentified people in the same vehicle were killed on the main road south from Kigali to Butare near the village of Save. He gave no other details of the attack.

Mr. Rwangabo is the most senior politician in the mainly-Tutsi government killed since Rwanda's Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels won a three-month civil war last July, ending the genocide of up to one million members of the minority Tutsi tribe and Hutu allies.

As a member of the Hutu majority in opposition to the ousted Hutu government blamed for the genocide, Mr. Rwangabo was named prefect of Butare in a bid to assure Hutu refugees it was safe to return home.

He was a spokesman for the Social Democratic Party and former aide to late Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, a moderate Hutu killed in the first days of the mass slaughter.

The Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA), the national army formed by the RPF, is responsible for a wave of arrests in recent weeks particularly around Butare of those suspected of involvement in the genocide.

More than 1,000 people have been arrested each week recently. U.N. special envoy Shaharyar Khan said 23,000 people were now crammed into prisons designed for 4,000 and putting more people in them was effectively a death sentence because conditions were so bad and there was no functioning judiciary.

"It's a powder keg," Mr. Khan told a news conference in the Kenyan capital Nairobi Saturday, adding that four to five people were dying daily from dysentery.

The new arrests have prompted Hutu villagers to return to camps for the displaced in the region in fear of being detained.

Members of the ousted government, driven into exile in Zaire last year, threatened to launch a guerrilla war inside Rwanda and the army has also been checking returning refugees in a hunt for saboteurs.

Russian Security Council meets today to tackle uncontrolled crime crisis

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia's highest security body meets here Monday to tackle a crisis of uncontrolled crime and corruption following the slaying of a popular journalist last week which provoked an outpouring of national outrage.

It is also expected to weigh world reaction to the fighting in the breakaway Republic of Chechnya following the visits of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin to Britain and France, and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to China and Japan.

Officials said the State Security Council headed by President Boris Yeltsin would examine ways to stem the influence of organised crime which even Mr. Yeltsin has admitted is pervasive at all levels of Russian political and economic life.

The Interfax News Agency quoted well-informed Kremlin sources as saying that the council, effectively Mr. Yeltsin's inner cabinet, would discuss the fight against crime and "urgent measures for the safety of citizens."

The murder of Vladimir Listyev, 38, last Wednesday has been widely attributed to a "contract killing" organised by businessmen trying to torpedo television advertising reforms aimed at ending massive corruption.

Reacting to the killing last week, Mr. Yeltsin said he was preparing new legislation to reform Russia's crime-fighting powers, including changes in the state prosecutor's office.

The president repeated an accusation he made in his state of the nation address in mid-February, that Russia's justice, economic, political

and crime-fighting systems were all riddled with corruption.

And, speaking at a funeral service for Mr. Listyev Friday, Sergei Filatov, head of Yeltsin's personal staff, vowed that the state would take the "toughest steps" to find Listyev's killers.

With parliamentary elections scheduled by the end of the year, and a presidential election in mid-1996, Mr. Yeltsin is under growing pressure from parliament, the public and the press to tackle a plague of organised crime.

Mr. Yeltsin hinted at an impending crackdown last week when he said: "Fearing ourselves, fearing to turn Russia into a police state, we are afraid to get tough in the struggle against crime."

The Security Council will also get a report-back from Mr. Chernomyrdin on his talks with British and French leaders in London and Paris last week aimed at drumming up foreign investment in Russia.

The level of foreign investment so far has been disappointing, partly because of international opposition to the Kremlin's use of massive military force to crush secessionists in Chechnya.

But Russia's image in the eyes of potential investors has also been hurt by the stop-go nature of economic reform, doubts about Russia's political stability and the perception that organised crime is running the country.

Mr. Chernomyrdin said in Paris at the weekend that he was confident the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would agree this week after weeks of negotiations to

grant Russia a crucial standby loan of \$6.3 billion.

He was speaking after a meeting with IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus, who has been invited to Moscow at the end of this week to wrap up talks on the loan between the Russian authorities and a visiting IMF delegation.

The loan is considered essential to economic reform plans. But the IMF has made it conditional on the Kremlin's undertaking to stick to an austere budget for 1995, and to continue steps to loosen controls on foreign trade.

Meanwhile Yegor Gaidar, who was Mr. Yeltsin's prime minister and until recently a chief ally, claims the president has no chance to win next year's election if he decides to run.

Yegor Gaidar, who broke with his former boss over the war in Chechnya, told a news conference in the Siberian city of Omsk Friday that he sees no scenario under which Mr. Yeltsin could win, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported Saturday.

Mr. Gaidar, the chief architect of Russia's economic reforms, now heads the Russia's Democratic Choice Party and is a leading reformer in parliament. He returned to Moscow Saturday from a tour of Siberian cities on behalf of his party.

Public approval of Mr. Yeltsin fell last month to an all-time low of 7 per cent, according to a poll conducted by Independent Television.

Neither Mr. Yeltsin nor Mr. Gaidar have said whether they will seek the presidency in elections scheduled for June 1996.

Social summit will be a battle for soul of U.N.

COPENHAGEN (R) — A huge and ambitious U.N. summit opens Monday with the aim of defusing what the United Nations calls a social time bomb primed by world-wide poverty, injustice and unemployment.

"It is a battle for the soul of the United Nations," Chile's U.N. Ambassador Juan Somavia said of the March 6-12 World Summit for Social Development which will attract 130 heads of state and government to a two-day final in Copenhagen's Bella Centre.

Mr. Somavia, 53, who devised the idea of the summit and led the preparations, brushed away fears that the conference would achieve little because of the magnitude of the problems and shrinking foreign aid budgets.

"Changes come step by step," he told Reuters in an interview. "The conference will at the least sound a cry of alarm, present a vision of what a better world would look like and adopt firm commitments, the most important being to eradicate poverty."

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, annoyed by the media's focus on peacekeeping during the United Nations' 50th anniversary year, wants to put the spotlight on social and economic issues in the Third World, Eastern Europe and some urban areas in the West.

More than one billion people live in poverty and about 700 million are underemployed. Seventy per cent of the world's poor are women. Poor countries owe outside lenders \$1.4 trillion in foreign debt.

The summit's goals include action to set national target dates and pursue strategies to eradicate poverty, a commitment to achieve full employment with the emphasis on small enterprises and relief of Third World debt.

U.S. Vice-President Al Gore, French President Francois Mitterrand, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Japanese Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama, Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng and South African President Nelson Mandela will attend.

U.S. first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and, probably, PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Cuban President Fidel Castro will speak at a non-governmental organisation (NGO) forum, an "alternative summit" at a former navy base on Copenhagen's waterfront.

Notable absentees from the summit are President Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister John Major and Russian President Boris Yeltsin. The Russians withdrew at the last minute.

The absence of Mr. Clinton, leader of the world's only superpower who is facing a wave of isolationism and conservatism at home, is considered by some observers as a serious setback.

Mr. Somavia disagreed: "It is not significant. The U.S. is represented at a high level and the key thing is that the country is embarking on a discussion about these issues."

Denmark, expecting up to 20,000 visitors to the two conferences, is laying on an extravaganza of fireworks,

laser shows and cultural events, including a special opening of the Tivoli gardens amusement park.

All 10,000 hotel rooms in Copenhagen have been commandeered for the summit and bookings must be made through a designated agency, annoying officials used to lifting the telephone and booking the best suite in town.

In Denmark's highest security effort, more than 3,000 police officers were bracing for demonstrations by left-wing "autonomous" activists against what they called "the U.N. imperialist feast."

A Danish newspaper, Ekstra-Bladet, labelled the summit "the party for the poor" and a Danish left-wing party in parliament, the Unity List, is boycotting the meeting, saying it is a feast for leaders which will change nothing.

Mr. Somavia said: "It is easy to be cynical. But it is more productive to ask 'what can I do to make a difference?' This is at the very heart of change."

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Europe on the scale

IN WHAT European diplomatic sources call a last chance effort to save the staggering peace process, the European Union has proposed a plan that would entail joint European-American action to help end the deadlock on many tracks of the peace talks and carry the process to fruition. The U.S. has not yet responded to the proposal, but many observers doubt that Washington would allow the Europeans to play a bigger role in the bilateral talks.

Washington would be wrong to shun the new European initiative, which was made after the visit of the EU troika delegation to the region last month. True, the U.S. would not pay any immediate price for keeping the European Union at bay from the process, especially the bilateral tracks. But one of the major partners will, namely the Arabs. And that is why the Arab World should start to put some pressure on Washington to accept the EU proposal. It goes without saying that the U.S. or any other parties would eventually have to pay a price if the Arabs lose out in this game.

That the Europeans have a vested interest in bringing stability to the region is not in doubt. Nor can it be clearer that Europe has done much to demonstrate its real interest in peace through its economic and political contribution to the peace talks. In any and all cases, the EU can play a major role in helping push forward the peace process and Washington has to accept this fact. Keeping the Europeans from the peace effort is an action that cannot be justified. Israeli claims that Europe will be biased towards the Arabs are as false now as they were before the launching of the peace talks in Madrid in 1991. The Arabs have accepted a U.S. role in the talks despite their belief Washington would favour Israel because they recognised the ability of Washington to help the talks move forward. The Israelis should do the same as far as Europe is concerned, especially that their claims about European favouritism towards the Arabs lack any solid proof.

Europe maintains — and rightly so — that it can help the peace process. Moreover, the Europeans say the success of the negotiations would fulfil a strategic interest for them, and they are willing therefore to take political risks to achieve it. That makes a lot of sense considering the nature of the interests the EU has in the region. Along with its participation in the process, Europe will bring diplomatic skills and funds to salvage the peace negotiations. These are two assets that the talks, and the region, need. The U.S. should not preempt a European role because it wants to maintain exclusivity in sponsoring the peace talks. After all, the declared objective of the U.S.' involvement in the peace talks is to bring stability to the region and end years of conflict. If others believe they can help it in this endeavour, they should be given a chance. The U.S. should realise that, and the Arabs must make sure that it does.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily addressed U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's coming visit to the Middle East, saying that Mr. Christopher's intention is to exercise pressure on Egypt and Syria to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to level threats against Iran for its alleged nuclear capabilities rather than trying to end the Middle East peace deadlock. Mahmoud Rimawi said that the U.S. administration realises too well that there can be no genuine and lasting peace in the region if Israel continues to possess a nuclear arsenal with which it can threaten neighbouring Arab states. But, unfortunately, Washington is following Israel's policy and is shaping its own in a manner that would only serve Israel's interests, said the writer. Mr. Rimawi said instead of trying to exercise pressure on the Jewish state to sign the NPT, Mr. Christopher is coming again to try to peddle Israel's views and protect its interests. Instead of trying to curtail Israel's aggressive designs and force it to implement the Oslo and Cairo agreements and reach a decision to end its occupation of Syrian and Lebanese territory, Mr. Christopher is coming to tell the Arabs that they ought to obey Washington's orders, said the writer.

A WRITER in Al-Dustour said that the Constitution should be amended to allow Parliament to be in session twice the present period so that its members can deal with the numerous questions at hand. Bassam Haddadin, who is a Parliament member, said that the long absence of Parliament from the scene of events gives the government a free hand to take any decisions, and weakens the cooperation between the legislative and the executive authorities. Even if Parliament convenes for an extraordinary session, that would not be of much value, because the session will be short and Parliament will have no control over the government's practices since the session will be confined to discussing topics listed on the agenda, added the writer. He said that in advanced democracies, parliament is always there to monitor the government's actions and they only have short recesses in addition to the weekends. The writer demanded that the Lower House itself discuss this issue and organise the relationship with the government on democratic basis.

Human Rights File

By Waleed Sa'di

West shouldn't interfere in internal conflicts in Muslim World

WESTERN EUROPE appears to be split on the dangers of Muslim fundamentalism with some members of NATO and the European Union (EU) seeking a new policy thrust towards North African countries where there is a dramatic upsurge in political Islam. Naturally, countries such as France, Spain and Italy see the "threat" as more imminent and ominous than countries in the north such as Britain and Germany. The European southern states feel the heat more because of the geographic proximity and effects that instability in North Africa would have on them. Not only is Europe worried about a possible mass exodus of moderates from North Africa to its shores, but it also has fears of what is now conceived as the "clash of civilisations" between Islam and the West.

Political Science Professor Samuel Huntington first introduced the notion of inherent civilisational clash between the West and Islam in 1993 and the idea has been picked up by several Western capitals and gained currency in other regions of the world. For Mr. Huntington and his disciples, Islam has replaced communism as the number one enemy of NATO and the EU.

The analogy between Islam, even in its extreme form, and communism is absurd, to say the least, and does not withstand the test of careful scrutiny. To begin with, there is no inherent clash between the Islamic faith and Christianity unless one wants one. Both religions share basic religious values and pray to the same God. For Muslims, Christians are also "ahl al kitab," meaning subscribers to the same monotheistic faith where the prophets of Christianity are revered and respected. This is a far cry from the "clash" between communism and the religions and ideology of the "free world." Mr. Huntington and like-minded people would be doing both Islam and Christianity a great deal of injustice if they sow the seeds of deep and imminent mistrust between the two religions. This is the surest way to go back to the era of wars of religions that plagued the dark ages in the distant past.

Instead of seeing a clash, we must try to see harmony and conciliation, unless, of course, we see a vested interest in creating a new enemy to replace an old one. Even Muslim

extremism is targeting only a domestic scene where it perceives, rightly or wrongly, a plenty of illegitimacy, corruption and disparity between the haves and have-nots. There is no credible evidence that fundamentalism in the Muslim World is targeting the non-Muslim World. In other words, there is no crusade to spread Islam outside the boundaries of the Muslim World by military or violent means.

I suggest that labelling any form of Islam a strategic enemy would only inflame passions and render a dialogue or reconciliation much more difficult. The issue of taming or containing extremism in Islam should be left for the Muslim World alone. In this vein, the ways of Algeria and Egypt may not be the most effective manner of achieving this end. The armed conflict in Algeria between government forces and those aligned with the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) has proved its futility time and again. The same goes for Cairo's policy on this issue.

For the West, through NATO or the EU, to take sides in these civil strife in a militant way, or by encouraging intransigence, would only add fuel to a raging fire that could indeed engulf the entire region. There is indeed an upsurge in Islamic fervour because there are real reasons for it that are closely associated with the political and socio-political scenes in the affected countries. The Western world would be better advised to seek out these factors that contribute to extremism and try to address them in cooperation with the established governments, if possible. The West still enjoys considerable leverage with most of the Arab capitals and helping those capitals better understand the crisis would be more productive than engaging opposition in all-out war. The European Union is scheduling a summit in Barcelona next November. The convening of this summit would provide a unique window of opportunity to engage the "challenge" posed by Islamic fundamentalism in a dialogue. The worst scenario would be created if the Barcelona meeting ends up escalating the crisis over religious fundamentalism by fanning the fire with slogans or programmes of work that are ill-conceived.

Israeli policies obstructing normalisation

By Dr. Fehed Faneek

THE ISRAELI government is accused by the Arab circles of being very smart. In particular, those opposing a peaceful settlement with Israel imagine that every Israeli move must have been accurately calculated and carefully planned ahead of time, and that specialists and scientists formulate Israeli policies and guide its government's moves. Anything that Israel does, or does not, should, according to those circles, be meant to accomplish some long-term objective, which the Israeli decision maker has in mind.

This false accusation stems from the superiority, a typical Arab likes to see in Israel, in full contrast with reality. It is one of the manifestations of an inferiority complex, self-disrespect and the wrong belief in the superiority of the Israeli over the Arab. We don't need to offer examples of the Israeli confusion and corruption. In

fact, all sectors of political, economic and social life in Israel are in a mess. The only exception is the military establishment, which used to be an excellent fighting force due to accountability. But the Palestinian uprising (intifada) was able to corrupt the Israeli army, perhaps beyond repair. The intifada reduced the Israeli armed forces to a riot police, running after Palestinian children, breaking their bones or killing them, just like any ngy occupation force.

In this respect, we point out the near foolishness of the Israeli political and economic behaviour, especially after the conclusion of peace treaties with each of Palestine and Jordan. Israel definitely knows that real peace is not brought about merely by signing a piece of paper, except if the aim is to have peace between heads of states. Israel also understands the deep-rooted beliefs of the peoples of the region towards

Jews, Israel and Zionism. It should know quite well that changing these beliefs and negative attitudes requires a special behaviour on its behalf.

However, any observer can realise that Israel is behaving politically and economically in exactly the opposite direction, contrary to all rational expectations. Therefore, we can conclude that Israel, and not Islamic fundamentalism, is the real obstacle to normalisation. Israel will be solely responsible if peace remained cold and finally failed to produce its natural fruition.

In the political sphere, Israel should have tried hard to convince Arabs, by deeds not words, that it respects its contractual obligations. On the contrary, it announced that the timetables, deadlines and milestones agreed upon in the accords are not sacred. It refused to redeploy and withdraw its soldiers from the cities and other heavily populated centres to allow the general Palestinian elec-

tions to take place, which is seven months overdue as listed in the original timetable agreed upon in the declaration of principles reached in Oslo and signed in Washington in September 1993.

In the economic sphere, Israel was expected to be quick in granting trade facilities to the Jordanian industries, especially when the maximum Jordanian exports to Israel could not possibly exceed one per cent of the Israeli imports. In this manner, it would have created Jordanian interests in maintaining and promoting peace. Unfortunately Israel did not. In its negotiations with Jordan over a trade agreement, Israel was equally tough, showing extreme hardness against giving Jordan any preferential treatment, being the lesser developed country.

Israel is behaving in obvious foolishness, as if it is ruled by mediocre politicians.

Lebanon unlikely to bend to Israeli blockade

By Andrew Tarnowski
Reuters

BEIRUT — Israel's naval blockade in South Lebanon is deliberately hurting some of Lebanon's poorest people but it is unlikely to force the Beirut government to bend to Israel's demands, independent analysts in South Lebanon believe.

The blockade on the impoverished fishermen of Tyre, Sidon and Damour is the latest in the string of Israeli attempts since the 1970s to exert pressure on Beirut by tightening the screws on the people of the south.

"They just don't realise this sort of thing doesn't work in Lebanon," a long-time non-Lebanese resident of the south told Reuters by telephone. "Ever since the 1970s the Israelis have been pounding Lebanese civilians to get them to pressure the Lebanese government but it never works," he said.

The last case was in Israeli bombardment in 1993 which killed 130 civilians and forced 300,000 to flee. Its aim was to pressure Beirut to stop guerrilla rocket attacks on Israel and attacks on troops in their South Lebanon occupation zone.

"And what did they get? They got more attacks on the troops than ever," the observer said. Pro-Iranian Hizbollah guerrillas still attack Israeli troops almost daily in the occupation zone.

The Lebanese-Israeli border is the last active front the Jewish state faces. It has signed peace with Egypt and Jordan, and a ceasefire agreement signed with Syria after the 1973 Middle East war has been

M. KAHIL



respected by both sides. This time Israel has extended a naval blockade, stopping 1,800 fishermen from sailing more than one km out to sea along 100 km of the Lebanon coast.

The action is robbing the fishermen of their tenuous incomes, estimated unofficially at only \$100 a month, with which many of them support families of six to eight.

An Israeli Defence Ministry source in Jerusalem said the purpose was to pressure the Lebanese army to stop treating residents of Israel's South Lebanon occupation zone virtually as traitors when they travel to and from the zone.

But the Beirut government responded swiftly, saying it will not ease searches and interrogations at the checkpoints.

It says they are legitimate, justified by suspi-

cions that Israeli agents from the zone detonated a car bomb that killed three people in December in a Beirut stronghold of Hizbollah.

An independent source in the south said one of Israel's aims in replying to the Lebanese measures was to look good with the 150,000 to 200,000 residents of the occupation zone.

But troops at Israeli checkpoints also humiliate travellers moving in and out of the zone, the non-Lebanese source said.

"It is very difficult to get back into the zone. People can't approach an Israeli checkpoint without being on a list. If you don't live in the zone you don't go near an Israeli checkpoint. You get shot," he added.

Travellers may approach, on foot only, at certain hours and days.

"You stand at a distance and identify yourself, car-

rying all your belongings. If you are allowed to approach you are searched and searched, and then questioned in offices."

"Then if you are allowed in you have to drag your possessions on foot for 500 metres to get to a car," the source added.

Some fishermen in Sidon and Tyre complain the government is not protecting them from the Israelis.

But one resident in the south said the blockade would rebound against the Israelis because the fishermen they were hitting were among the poorest people in the south and included many Christians as well as Sunni and Shiite Muslims.

"This is going to fall back on the Israelis' heads," the non-Lebanese resident said. "They're uniting people against them. This is going to unite people in a way they've never been united before."

Europe 'running scared' of Mideast

By G. H. Jansen

ON THE 7th and 8th of this month, Nicosia will be the venue of a seminar of 40 to 70 persons invited by the Council of Europe to exchange ideas on "Europe and the Middle East: Independence and Partnership." There will be representatives of a whole plethora of European bodies including the North-South centre of the Council and from right Middle East states.

Cyprus might well wonder what has hit it. What it has done to deserve this minor deluge of do-gooding well-meaning foreigners.

The answer is really quite simple: Europe is running scared of the Middle East. For the past few weeks a multiplicity of European groupings have reproached Europe for neglecting its southern flank and of worrying too much about Eastern Europe while it is the Middle East and North Africa that are going to present dangers to Europe in the future.

This seminar is the first attempt to open up Middle Eastern minds to the novel idea that Europe can be a friend of the Middle East instead of being its traditional and long-standing enemy.

This will not work, because there are two very real obstacles to Europe-Middle East understanding: Islam and Israel and nothing very much can be done about either issue.

The NATO secretary general, Willy Claes, let the cat out of the bag when, speaking recently of the future prospects for Europe, said that militant Islam posed as much of a threat to Europe as Communism once did. Because of the resulting uproar from Spain, Italy and France, who accused their secretary general of making "new enemies" and of mounting a "new crusade," Mr. Claes hurriedly denied that he had meant any such thing but that was too late since he did actually say what he was reported to have said. And the suspicious Middle Easterners have no doubt that he meant it.

It is these atavistic fears of each other going back centuries, and as alive today as ever, as the words of Mr. Claes revealed, that are a solid barrier to Middle East-Europe understanding. It is not that Europe faces Islamic eruption up the Danube valley as in the days of the Ottomans, though Muslims the world over have not failed to notice how the Christian West has successfully blocked every attempt to set up a Muslim majority state in Bosnia, while accepting states for Orthodox Serbs or Roman Catholic Croats.

The Muslim threat has now, as it were, been secularised: It is not the threat of scimitar-wielding warriors under the green flag of Islam waging Jihad but of masses of Muslims fleeing the establishment of an Islamic state in Algeria or elsewhere in North Africa and taking refuge in Europe.

How are Europe's fears of Islam to be allayed? Not by seminars in Nicosia or anywhere else. Generations of fears and suspicions will take, at least, many decades to be eradicated. The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe could take a first, small, very small step by encouraging politicians and public figures from Europe to take a crash course of, say a month, on Islam and Islamic history and civilisation in such places as the universities of Aix en Provence and of Leyden in Holland. This just might stop important people like the secretary general of NATO from making inflammable and stupid remarks.

Those remarks had a familiar sound because for the last many months Israeli spokesmen have been saying the same thing: "Europe — and the rest of the world — watch out for Islam." When, in fact, for

more than 40 years now it is the utterly alien and intrusive presence in an unwelcome Middle East of a Jewish state staunchly supported by Europe that has kept alive Muslim fears of a "new crusade." After all Theodor Herzl, the spiritual father of Israel, when he was lobbying European governments to support the Zionist idea, said that the Jewish state would be "a bulwark against the Orient" for Europe. And Israel today is "European" in every way that matters.

It is, unfortunately, too late now for European governments to distance themselves from the Jewish state or to mitigate their wholesale and uncritical support for it. Of which there were two further examples just last week: No European government, with the solitary exception of France, has said one critical word against the wholly illegally maritime blockade Israel has imposed on southern Lebanon; and the Europeans on the Security Council, including France, meekly agreed not to pass a resolution or to say anything at all after a long discussion of the Arab complaint against Israel's illegal settlement policy, because of U.S. pressure.

But as a first and only a small first step towards a move even-handed policy towards Israel (and the Arabs and Muslims do not expect anything more) and European governments could at least show some sign that they recognise Israel as an alien and intrusive element in the region.

That, indeed, is an obvious fact, but unless the Muslims are assured of Europe's underlying bonafides, any number of seminars and conferences will be a waste of time and money.

One serious attempt was made by Europe to rid itself of its pro-Israel stigma when in 1980 a summit conference issued the Venice Declaration which the Arabs welcomed and Israel rejected. Because of that rejection the U.S. also rejected it and because to that rejection the Venice Declaration disappeared into the mists of history.

It is the flagrant pro-Israeli policies of the U.S. that keep Europe linked to Israel which wrecks Europe's friendship with the Middle East. The spokesman of the French Foreign Ministry said last week: "Our (European) role in the Middle East is complementary to that of the Americans." As long as that remains true and Israel continues its present aggressive policies, Middle East-Europe friendship would be very difficult if not impossible.

The Nicosia seminar has a very lofty and valuable objective: To foster trans-Mediterranean understanding. Yet its logistical arrangements reduce it to near-absurdity because that lofty goal is to be achieved, however partially, in two and a half hours of speechifying and two sessions of discussion lasting two hours and two and a half hours each. The best explanation of such gatherings has been given in Arthur Koestler's sardonic novel "The Call Girls," on semi-professional conference-goers. So perhaps the splendid weather that Cyprus is known to enjoy at this time of year has something to do with the seminar being held in Nicosia now.

Gatherings like the seminar should either not be held at all or should be spread over several days of long and serious discussion.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan was scheduled to be a keynote speaker but cancelled (probably because the seminar came too close to the Eid al Fitr) and his place has been taken by Nabil Shaath, Minister of Planning in the Palestine National Authority — who may or may not attend.

Poverty on the rise in U.S., but causes are disputed

By Diane Bartz
Agence France Presse

WASHINGTON — Amid the riches of the United States, millions of homeless and working poor struggle to get by and experts are offering radically different explanations for why most never rise out of poverty.

Causes of poverty here and worldwide will be the subject of the U.N. World Development Summit of non-governmental organisations in Copenhagen from March 6 to 12.

Ask the experts to define the root cause of poverty in the United States and two answers are forthcoming: Centrists and liberals blame the economic structure, and conservatives say the problem is rooted in morality and single parenthood.

This split has policy implications, with conservatives more likely to stress the importance of work and less likely overall to spend money to help the poor, especially given the mixed success of the billions already spent.

Both agree that families headed by a single parent — almost always a mother — are more likely to join the 13 per cent of Americans, or 32.5 million people, living below the poverty line than are two-parent households.

And most agree that unskilled workers in America have lost considerable earning power in recent decades. 30 per cent in the past 20 years if inflation is taken into account.

France Fox Piven, who teaches political science at the City University of New York, doesn't hesitate a heat when asked for reasons why poverty has become worse.

"One is that wages have been falling very rapidly and unemployment remains high. The scale of loss in wages is quite breathtaking historically," she says.

"The other change has to do with the fact that government regulations no longer protect workers. The minimum wage in the 1960s brought a family of three \$2,000 over the poverty line. Now, that family would be \$2,000 short of the poverty line."

Linda Gordon, who specialises in welfare history at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, agrees.

"A key statistics that is useful to keep in mind is that the United States... has one of the highest rates of (income) inequality in the world," she says.

"It's absolutely way up there with South Africa (and) much worse than Europe or Japan."

But Patrick Fagan, a senior policy analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation, says the poor themselves are to blame.

"If you look at the poor population, divorce and single parenthood are the two root causes," he says.

"Structural poverty seems to come from single-parent poverty. It's an issue of the spirit, of the family and... it's not amenable to economics."

Mr. Fagan acknowledges that wages have fallen but says that higher levels of out-of-wedlock births is to blame.

He says children born out of wedlock do not do as well at school, tend to quit school earlier and experience a host of other problems associated with this.

"All of the social pathologies have a very high connection to single parenthood," he says.

"When it reaches 30 per cent, it leads to the breakdown of the neighbourhood and you start to get the crime. The older men are not there, they haven't raised the boys."

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The war on poverty, which began in the mid-1960s and had pretty much ended by the late 1970s, left a mixed legacy, centrists say, while Mr. Fagan, a conservative, calls it an "abysmal failure."

"In the mid-1960s, we spent 1.5 to five per cent of GNP (gross national product) on anti-poverty programmes," he says, adding that that figure has grown to five or six per cent of GNP.

Mr. Fagan includes welfare, medical care for the poor and tax cuts for low income people in figures for anti-poverty spending.

Dr. Fivco believes the anti-poverty programmes were too little over too short a time, but that they did some good.

"The war on poverty did make it possible for a lot of people, especially minorities to move into the middle class," she says.

She is also pessimistic about the future.

"A lot of people are worried about declining economic circumstances and poor people, especially poor kids, are perhaps the most despairing of all but instead of that becoming a source of sympathy it is becoming a source of hate," she says.

"Politicians are encouraging people who are just holding it together to blame the poor."



A Russian boy looks at his destroyed home in Grozny. The war in Chechnya has widened the gap in the West's perception of Russia's role in Europe (AFP photo)

'All the talk about European security is mostly talk'

By Max Jakobson

HELSINKI — The debate on European security has been brought down to the level of grass-roots realism by a recent survey of German opinion. According to a report in the International Herald Tribune on Feb. 8, only one in four respondents said German troops should help Poland if Russia were to attack it, but nearly 60 per cent said they supported bringing Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic into NATO.

The contradiction between the two responses is a symptom of the schizophrenic attitude to security issues prevalent in all Western countries. People tend to look upon international organisations like NATO, the United Nations or the European Union (EU) as autonomous bodies separate from their members.

Germans who favour NATO membership for Poland while refusing to support the use of German troops to defend it are saying, in effect, that Poland should be helped, but let others do it. However, if relatively few Germans are ready to join in the defence of their neighbours, the fact is that the British or the French or the Spaniards are unlikely to step into the breach.

The confusion is compounded by the ambiguity in official attitudes on Russia. Is Russia a partner for peace or a potential aggressor? Western governments evade the issue by explaining that NATO membership for Central European countries is meant to promote stability. But if one asks a Pole or a Czech, he will say NATO is needed for defence against Russia.

This gap in perceptions has been widened by the war in Chechnya. It has sharpened the security concerns of Russia's neighbours, but the official Western view is that, while "the excessive force" used by the Russian army is deplored, the war is an internal affair — a human rights issue.

President Bill Clinton's State of the Union speech was revealing. "Not a single Russian missile is pointed at the children of America," he said, and went on to promise that the United States and Russia were on their way to destroying the missiles and the bombers that carry nuclear warheads. That was all on Russia — not one word about Chechnya.

In other words, Russia is important because it has the capacity to hit targets on the American continent, but as the threat of a nuclear attack recedes, the importance of Russia for the national security of the United States diminishes. What the Russian army is doing in its southern backyard does not merit a mention in the president's speech.

The Russian writer Vasili Aksyonov, who now lives in Washington, has gone a step further. In a recent article in Le Monde, he draws a parallel between the Russian action in Chechnya and the 1989 American operation in Panama. By stemming the Islamic tide along the southern rim of the former Soviet Union, he claims, Russia thus joins the West in a global war against international terrorism and crime.

A similar view has been put forward by Jack Matlock, who was U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1987 to 1991. In a detailed article in the Feb. 16 issue of The New York Review of Books, Mr. Matlock says that President Boris Yeltsin had "the obligation to quell an illegal seizure of power within his country" in order to remove Dzhokar Dudayev's "hoodlums from control of Grozny," which had become a major hub of arms and drug trafficking. This was almost word for word what Mr. Yeltsin said in a speech recently.

There is another view of Chechnya that deserves attention. In his massive record of the Soviet gulag, Alexander Solzhenitsyn singles out the Chechens as the only people who in the camps totally refused to succumb to "the psychology of submission." It seems that Mr. Yeltsin and his advisers have not read Mr. Solzhenitsyn's book. The writer himself has been strangely silent throughout the war.

In the eyes of people living closer to the scene, the resistance put up by the Chechens has given the war a significance that transcends the legal justification for the Russian action. It cannot be dismissed a police raid against robbers and smugglers.

The brutal assault on Grozny is above all a reminder of the way Russia has traditionally behaved towards small nations. That the Russian army has performed poorly is not much of a consolation. Indeed, to someone who, like myself, has been at the receiving end of a Russian offensive, the reports from

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Commentary

Panama. By stemming the Islamic tide along the southern rim of the former Soviet Union, he claims, Russia thus joins the West in a global war against international terrorism and crime.

A similar view has been put forward by Jack Matlock, who was U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1987 to 1991. In a detailed article in the Feb. 16 issue of The New York Review of Books, Mr. Matlock says that President Boris Yeltsin had "the obligation to quell an illegal seizure of power within his country" in order to remove Dzhokar Dudayev's "hoodlums from control of Grozny," which had become a major hub of arms and drug trafficking. This was almost word for word what Mr. Yeltsin said in a speech recently.

There is another view of Chechnya that deserves attention. In his massive record of the Soviet gulag, Alexander Solzhenitsyn singles out the Chechens as the only people who in the camps totally refused to succumb to "the psychology of submission." It seems that Mr. Yeltsin and his advisers have not read Mr. Solzhenitsyn's book. The writer himself has been strangely silent throughout the war.

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Chechnya sound depressingly familiar. The Russian army has always relied on brute force and an inexhaustible supply of manpower, rather than on tactical finesse, to achieve its goals.

The war in Chechnya is likely to fade from Western television screens. The process of designing what is grandly called a European security architecture will continue according to its institutional calendar. For NATO, 1995 is a year of study. For the European Union, 1996 will be the beginning of talks on a common foreign and security policy. It will also be a year of presidential elections first in Russia and then in the United States.

European security is being developed like a product designed to please the manufacturer rather than the market. But life has the inconvenient habit of refusing to stand still while politicians deliberate.

International Herald Tribune.

Arabs to test Israel

(Continued from page 1)

Palestinians.

Jordan is waiting for final results of a national census it carried out in December, the first in nearly two decades, to make final say.

Jordanian officials often quote the figure of 600,000 — a mixture of state records and United Nations numbers. Many of Jordan's four million population are Palestinian refugees.

"We agreed at the Cairo meeting that we will insist on the right of return of displaced Palestinians," said a Jordanian official.

"The legal base for that has been covered by the Israeli-PLO 1993 declaration of principles, successive U.N. resolutions and the fourth Geneva conventions. The conventions regulate the relationship between the occupier and civilians under their rule."

In Tel Aviv, Mr. Peres's media adviser Behira Berdugo issued a statement saying the foreign ministry had as yet made no decision about the return of the 1967 refugees.

She said the group in Amman would meet to decide on both the principles for the return of persons who left the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 and on the measures required to prevent chaos and disorder.

"The Amman conference has been characterised as an informal gathering to discuss a group of problems — such as the determination of the actual number of displaced persons, the criteria to be used in this process, and which body will determine the official numbers," Ms. Berdugo said.

In the old souks of the Mideast, storytellers sing a dying song

By Nora Boustany

DAMASCUS — Old and young men listened wide-eyed their imaginations captive to the intonations and revelations of Salah Hallak, known in the souk life of Damascus as Abu Shadi, one of Syria's last remaining popular storytellers.

He adjusted his red fez and cracked his sword against a brass table for attention. His listeners sat up in surprise, some spilling their coffee. The story had reached its climax.

"Save Abla for us," the men shouted widely, in a plea to hasten the release of the Juliet of pre-Islamic times when she fell into captivity.

The roars of sympathy for Abla did not last, and soon the audience split into rival factions — one cheering for Antar Ben Shaddad, the courageous slave whom she loves, and the other for Amara Ben Ziad, the nobleman competing for her affection.

Two blind men in dark glasses and tweeds smacked their sticks against the cold tiles in excitement.

In Syria's traditional paternalistic society, the epics passed down from grandfather to father to son still have mass appeal. Never mind that the Kerosene lanterns hanging from the domed ceilings are rusty and that photographs of President Hafez Assad are tacked to chipped walls.

This is a world far from the sterility of politics in Syria, a universe of chivalry

and heroism.

But the storytellers, or *hakawatis*, once popular in the squares and street cafes of the major cities of the Mediterranean basin — from Marrakesh to Cairo, Beirut to Damascus — are dying out since the introduction of radios in coffeehouses and the elimination of the old souks.

Today, there is only one surviving storyteller in Tripoli in northern Lebanon and two besides Abu Shadi in Syria.

The popular Egyptian singer Mithqal, who travelled with his storyteller father from town to town, claimed in an interview two years ago that Egyptian authorities discouraged the profession. Fights broke out too often when listeners split into factions over the outcome of a story.

"Some storytellers would raise the stakes so more money would be thrown at them," Mithqal said.

"I have a feeling it is going to come back," said Nidhal Achkar, a Lebanese actress and theatre manager.

She is trying to revive the practice in her City Theatre in Beirut.

In Damascus, where the clamour of street vendors, haggling housewives and crazed beggars roaming the narrow Hamidiye souks dies down at dusk, darkness enfolds the alley behind the Omayyad Mosque, ancient site of the Church of John the Baptist.

After *iftar*, the festive evening meal ending a day of fasting during the Mus-

lim holy month of Ramadan, customers crowd into the Nofara Cafe, their chairs spilling onto the stone steps outside.

"I come for the *hakawati*, because he is the memory of Damascus," said Sam Chigori, 20, a student of business administration who comes once a week.

"It is always nice to be able to look a little behind you as you are walking," said Fahd Raslan, 28, an instructor at Aleppo's Hotel School. "There is this proverb here that says: 'He who does not have the old will never find the new.'"

When Queen Taj Bakht is kidnapped by the invading crusaders on her way from Damascus to Egypt to join her king, the story goes, Ibrahim comes to her rescue.

"What is thy name?" she asks.

"My name is lost and scattered," Ibrahim sighs. "Oh, lady, I am a field worker, a peasant with cracked soles."

"I shall call you Ibrahim — the Shield of Virgins — and I have become your sister," the queen offers.

"And I your servant, my lady, and the servant of each maiden," Abu Shadi recites, bowing his head.

"Our stories are about heroism and the defence of honour, charity — the *Hakawati* embodies all of this," said Abu Shadi, who reads from a tattered text handwritten 300 years ago.

"Today, the *hakawati* is a kind of moral guide."

The Washington Post.

'Tortured' pilot sues Kuwait for compensation in U.K. court

THE KUWAITI government is to defend itself in a British court against allegations that it assisted in the torture of one of its own officers after the Gulf war.

The unprecedented legal action, to be heard next month, has been brought by Suleiman Al Adsan, a former Kuwaiti pilot, who is hiding in Britain after receiving death threats.

British courts have historically ruled that foreign governments are immune from prosecution in the U.K. But last year, in a landmark decision, the Court of Appeal allowed Mr. Al Adsan to serve writs for compensation on Kuwait through British courts. He also issued writs against three members of the ruling family.

The Foreign Office was asked to serve the writs last summer and the defendants have since appointed lawyers in Britain. They insist they are immune from a compensation claim over the torture allegations and are to contest the Appeal Court ruling at the first pre-trial hearing on March 13.

Kuwait argues that, under the rules of immunity, it cannot be held liable for acts of torture in its own country. But Mr. Al Adsan argues that he was tortured with the knowledge and assistance of the Kuwaiti government.

If Mr. Al Adsan is successful, the case is likely to promote a flood of similar claims against foreign governments in cases of

A Kuwaiti who stayed to fight the Iraqis has issued writs against government and royal family, reports Tim Kelsey

alleged human rights violations.

The Kuwaiti government has tried to stop the case coming to court by applying pressure on Mr. Al Adsan's family. An earlier High Court judgment accepted that the Kuwaiti ambassador in London warned Mr. Al Adsan that if he did not stop pursuing his case he could be killed by agents of the ruling family.

When the Iraqis invaded Kuwait, Mr. Al Adsan stayed in the country while most, including those who persecuted him, fled to Saudi Arabia. He was born in London, but had lived for most of his life in Kuwait where he served as a flight lieutenant in the air force. During the occupation he worked with the resistance and was badly wounded in encounters with the Iraqi military.

According to claims made in the High Court, when the Iraqis arrived, Mr. Al Adsan was asked to hide a videotape from the invaders. It allegedly depicted one of the most senior members of the ruling family, Sheikh Jaber Sabah Al Saud Al Sabah,

being intimate with women. Mr. Al Adsan says that the tape was then distributed without his knowledge.

After liberation, Mr. Al Adsan claims the sheikh began a witch-hunt of those responsible for the tape's distribution. More than 140 Kuwaitis were rounded up and held without charge. On May 2, 1991, the sheikh and another member of the ruling family, Sheikh Talal Fahad Al Ahmad Al Sahah — a nephew of the emir of Kuwait — came to the pilot's door with a henchman. All were armed with machine-guns.

Mr. Al Adsan says he was whipped with the guns, forced into a jeep and taken to prison. He claims he was handcuffed, blindfolded and beaten.

On the fourth day of his detention, he alleges he was taken to a cellar. His blindfold was removed and he saw Sheikh Jaber and two soldiers. One pointed a gun at Mr. Al Adsan's head, while the sheikh said he should sign a confession or he would die. As he was led into a room, he says he saw a pregnant Palestinian woman being forced into a

chair wired to electrodes. He signed the confession and the sheikh let him go. His possessions, including his yacht and cars, had been destroyed.

Two days later Mr. Al Adsan alleges he went to the sheikh's palace to help him find the remaining copies of the tape. He was taken to another palace with a swimming pool in which five or six bodies were floating. He was forced into the water, and his head repeatedly held under so he thought he was drowning.

He says he was then taken to a small room, empty except for two petrol-soaked mattresses. The sheikh lit a match, and he and Sheikh Talal and a third accomplice watched the fire through a window. Mr. Al Adsan wrote the names of his torturers on his long Johns and signed. If he died, he said, he wanted them to be discovered.

The sheikh then opened the door, and with his foot on the man's back poured mineral water over his badly burnt victim.

The fire was put out and the sheikh said he would shoot Mr. Al Adsan. But the pilot told the sheikh that his father knew that he was with him, and was expecting him home.

He was taken to a hospital, and warned not to tell anyone what had happened.

The Independent.

OECD says coordination needed on privatisation

ARIS (R) — As debt-ridden governments sell more state assets, timing will become crucial and they will have to coordinate the pace of paper hitting the market to ensure success, the OECD said Sunday.

"Some recent privatisations have revealed signs of a tug-of-war among retail investors," a document released by the 25-member Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said.

"Given the large number of future privatisations from many different countries, the timing of offerings will become of increasing relevance," it said in its thrice-yearly financial market trends report.

Governments must ensure domestic sell-offs are marketed with sufficient time between them and that they take full heed of major privatisations by other countries. Some \$200 billion worth of privatisations from European OECD members alone can be expected over the next five years, it said.

Proceeds from privatisations in Europe this year are totalling some \$40.5 billion in 1995 with the largest offerings expected in France — \$9.9 billion. Britain with \$8.5 billion and Italy with \$6.5 billion. Major sell-offs are also expected in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and elsewhere.

The value of forecast European privatisations for 1995 is down from \$50.8 million last year. But the 1995 total is expected to outstrip both the 1994 and 1993 totals, powered by the part-privatisation of German telecommunications giant Deutsche Telekom.

Telecommunications is likely to be a chief focus of privatisation activity in the years ahead, the OECD added, quoting estimates that sell-offs of telecommunications companies will amount to \$100 billion worldwide over the next five years.

And privatisation and development of capital markets in non-OECD countries are also rapidly expanding the amount of shares on offer which will trigger increased competition for funds, the report said.

The report said it did not believe the large number of privatisations in Europe had contributed to a fall in share prices in 1994, which it attributed to rising long-term interest rates and a decline in overall market optimism.

It warned, however, that any major slump in equity markets could jeopardise future sales. "Any major downturn in equity markets that leads to shifts in portfolio allocations away from equity could undermine current privatisation plans," it said.

"Equity prices will have to remain generally strong in order to support investors' appetite for new issues coming to market," the report pointed out.

The sell-offs are having powerful impacts on the countries' financial markets, resulting in sizeable rises in market capitalisation, the report added.

In Italy, privatisations could increase capitalisation by a 30 per cent. And France's sell-off drive accounted for more than 10 per cent of market capitalisation by the end of 1994.

The report added it was important that governments not use privatisation proceeds as a cushion to relieve the immediate pressure for taking structural measures to cut deficits.

Gulf states head for gas boom

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states are heading for a gas boom reminiscent of the oil era 15 years ago when their coffers were flush with funds and economies were galloping as fast as 15 per cent.

With eyes on the growing Asian market for the cleaner source of energy and investment in the oil industry becoming less attractive due to weak crude prices, they are on the verge of launching major projects to tap their enormous gas reserves.

"A bright future is awaiting the gas sector in the Gulf countries as a large part of their gas reserves has remained unexploited," said Ihsan Abu Huleika of the Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consultancy, which is overseeing plans to set up a regional gas distribution network.

"Despite the delay in gas projects, they have the advantage of being set up when demand is growing fast as several countries are switching to gas," he added.

The biggest gas liquefaction project is planned in Qatar, which has the third largest natural gas reserves in the world. The two-party project, which will tap the giant North Field, will produce more than 10 million tonnes per year at a cost of around \$10.3 billion.

Qatar has already secured firm purchase commitments or signed letters of intent with potential buyers in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, India, Turkey and Thailand.

It is also negotiating with other customers for the remaining output.

But it is facing competition from neighbouring Oman, which is planning to build a \$6 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant to produce five million tonnes per year. Experts, however, said such competition would not affect the projects.

Oman, which says the project could be completed by 2000, is also planning to supply India with around 1.4 billion cubic metres of natural gas per day through an underwater pipeline passing near neighbouring Iran.

Oman embarked on such plans after major discoveries more than doubled its gas reserves to around 25 trillion cubic feet (750 billion cubic metres).

Experts said the project in Qatar, with gas reserves of nearly 235.6 trillion cubic feet (7.07 trillion cubic metres), would fetch it as much as its oil income of around \$2.7 billion in 1994.

In Oman, gas sales could boost its revenues by more than 30 per cent, they said.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) already earns as much as \$1.3 billion a year from LNG sales as it is the only Gulf nation to have a gas industry.

Income is set to sharply rise after it doubled output at its main liquefaction plant on Das Island to five million tonnes per year in a \$1 billion project completed late 1994.

All the production is supplied to the Japanese Tokyo Electric Production Company under a 25-year deal signed with the Abu Dhabi Gas Liquefaction Company (ADGAS) in 1992.

Another UAE firm, GASCO, is to expand its gas processing plant in Ruwais by 50 per cent to accommodate more supplies from onshore fields being developed in line with an ambitious programme approved by the Supreme Petroleum Council in 1991.

According to the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Arab states need around \$47 billion to develop their gas industry, of which nearly half is to be spent by 2000.

Gas projects run parallel with oil expansions in the region which controls 60 per cent of the world's crude.

"Gas projects in the Gulf are now more feasible as the region is close to most potential markets and the recent GATT agreement will open more outlets for the Gulf exports," said Abdullah Al Qumais, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) assistant secretary general for economic affairs.

"Gulf states are also expected to discover more gas following recent encouraging signs in some countries. This will enable them to meet a rapid growth in demand in the long term," he pointed out.

Independent estimates showed oil demand was projected to grow by around 62 per cent from 56 million barrels per day (b/d) in 1990 to 91 million b/d in 2020.

Chinese premier blames government 'mistakes' for high inflation

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese Premier Li Peng made a strong public criticism of the government's anti-inflation policy Sunday, blaming the failure of efforts to control rapid price rises on a series of "mistakes."

Mr. Li, setting a cautious government plan for 1995 before 2,811 delegates at the opening of the annual National People's Congress (NPC), called for a slowdown in economic growth from 11.8 per cent in 1994 to eight or nine per cent this year to tackle high inflation.

sharp increases in retail prices — which rose 21.7 per cent in 1994, more than double the official target — have "aroused sharp resentment in the masses," Mr. Li said, setting this year's official goal at 15 per cent.

Last year's rise "was due both to objective reasons and to mistakes of governments at all levels," he said, as President Jiang Zemin and other senior leaders, including vice premier and economic czar Zhu Rongji, listened to his annual work report from the dais in the Great Hall of the People.

At a time when Chinese leaders are jostling for position ahead of the death of ailing 90-year-old patriarch Deng Xiaoping, some diplomats interpreted Mr. Li's comments as a criticism of Mr. Zhu, who launched the country's anti-inflation drive in mid-1993.

One diplomat said the "candidness" of Mr. Li's admission — together with his focus on state firms, agriculture, crime and corruption — may have been part of efforts to ensure stability after Mr. Deng's death by showing that senior leaders are aware of the people's grievances.

The premier said the government had underestimated the repercussions of increasing state purchasing prices to boost farmers' incomes and encourage them to grow staple crops and of the effective devaluation that accompanied January 1994's unification of the dual currency system.

Other mistakes included insufficient investment in agriculture, slackening control over management of markets and pricing, and failure to act to slow excessive increases in fixed asset investment, wages and money supply, he said.

"The government took no emergency measures to stop these practices and launched no overall austerity programme," due to fears of bringing economic growth to a halt, Mr. Li said, pledging that 1994's failures would be righted this year.

Among other anti-inflationary measures, he said that no new price reforms would be carried out this year.

In a speech that stressed the need to ensure social stability and promoted the principle of "plain living" instead of "exaggeration and waste," Mr. Li said the focus of development should be shifted from high rates to "restructuring, improving performance and raising the quality of economic growth."

He emphasised the primacy this year of curbing inflation, strengthening the weak agricultural sector and tackling the chronic inefficiency state enterprises.

Yeltsin orders belt-tightening

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin has ordered a new dose of austerity in a series of decrees early aimed at securing a \$4 billion standby loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In three new decrees with immediate effect, Mr. Yeltsin ordered all spending under his control, clamped down on budget-busting tax exemptions and ordered the government to press ahead with further price liberalisation.

Economists said the move amounted to a much-needed personal assurance by Mr. Yeltsin to the IMF that Russia's belt-tightening policies fight double-digit inflation it not go off-track.

A senior IMF team is in Moscow for what is widely seen as a final round of talks on the standby loan. Economists expect the loan to be disbursed in instalments tied closely to the budget performance. A first tranche is expected to be freed in April, they say.

First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais, announcing the decrees at a joint news conference with IMF economic adviser Alexander Livshits, said Mr. Yeltsin would meet IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus when he visits Moscow this month.

"I think during the visit of Camdessus, the president will set him. A timetable has been fixed yet but this is linked to the end talks with the IMF. We plan to finalise the talks early next week," he told Reuters after the news conference.

Russian officials expect Mr. Camdessus to visit Moscow before mid-March at the invitation of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Mr. Livshits said the latest measures would push Russia's stalled market reforms forward.

"These decrees are aimed at continuing economic reform. They will provide more efficiency to the economy," he said.

A first decree put under presidential control all state spending not covered by the budget or any move that would reduce income, giving Mr. Yeltsin direct control over government finances.

Such spending decisions will be taken only by presidential decrees which will also decide what sums will be spent and when.

Mr. Yeltsin gave the finance ministry two weeks to come up with proposals to cancel earlier spending decisions which were not covered by the 1995 budget, which targets a deficit below eight per cent of gross domestic product.

Exemptions on taxes and customs duties would also be decided directly by presidential decree, the document said.

Import tax exemptions granted to many Russian enterprises were another sticky point in the months-old talks with the IMF.

Exemptions that have angered the IMF include one for a national sports foundation set up by Mr. Yeltsin. Its tax-free imports of alcohol and cigarettes have cost the budget at least several trillion roubles, economists say.

Similar exemptions have been granted to Afghan war veterans, whose organisations run chain-stores in Moscow selling hundreds of millions of dollars worth tax-free stereos and other consumer electronics.

Mr. Yeltsin gave the government two weeks to cancel previous presidential orders on tax exemptions and fiscal privileges.

Another Yeltsin decree ordered the government to liberalise prices further in the economy.

"The government must recognise that further liberalisation of prices is indispensable," it said, ordering the cabinet to cut the number of goods subject to state-regulated prices.

Prices should be state-regulated only for goods and services produced by monopolies in oil and gas, communications, electricity and transport, Mr. Yeltsin ordered.

A third decree said monopolies would come under strict state control, a move aimed at protecting consumers by preventing monopolies from exploiting liberalisation by raising prices and damaging other sectors of the economy.

Iraqi dinar plunges to record low

BAGHDAD (R) — The Iraqi dinar sank to a record low against the U.S. dollar Sunday, pushing further up the price of essential consumer goods.

The dollar was trading at 1,030 dinars on the black market, up from 900 last week. Traders said the Iraqi currency was expected to plummet further under political pressure from the United States to keep Gulf war sanctions intact.

At Shourja, Baghdad's main trading centre, traders can be seen carrying sacks full of dinars. Some even hire porters to help.

"Now, a civil servant's monthly salary will only buy five kilograms of onions on average," said a grocer in Baghdad.

Iraq's central bank has pegged the dollar at 600 dinars, but only a few people with hard currency now opt to trade with the government-licensed exchange bureaus in Baghdad.

Traders attributed the recent decline to the campaign by the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright to block any attempt to ease or lift the ban on Iraq's oil exports.

Ms. Albright ended a tour of five nations with seats on the U.N. Security Council at the weekend and returned to New York, where U.N. envoys said there was not enough support in the 15-member council for easing the sanctions.

Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz was quoted by the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) Saturday as saying the council would not ease or lift the sanctions at the next periodic review scheduled for March 13.

"We have a volatile currency and market. World attitude on sanctions affects us a great deal," said a trader in Baghdad.

He said the dollar was in high demand and the government, its coffers empty of hard cash, had no means to interfere.

Before Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which sparked sweeping U.N. trade sanctions and subsequently the 1991 Gulf war, one dinar was worth \$3.20.

Attempts by the government to stem the slide of the dinar have so far failed. Illegal dealers risk having a foot or hand amputated under a new law. Last month the government raised the travel tax to 100,000 dinars from 40,000.

"One thing we are sure of, the situation will not remain like this. We are confident the government has plans to counter inflation once sanctions are eased," another trader said.

He said people with dinars were trying to convert them into dollars, gold or real estate. "We traders spend almost all the money we get on goods to fend off inflation," he added.

Price rises resulting from the dinar's slide have pushed even some local farm products almost beyond the reach of ordinary people.

Tomatoes, essential for Iraqi cuisine, shot up to 350 dinars a kilogramme Sunday from 100 two weeks ago. Onions were 500 dinars a kilogramme, eggplants 600 dinars and cucumbers 300 dinars.

The price of other basic goods also rose. Sugar was 625 dinars a kilogramme up from 450 last week. A kilogramme of rice went up to 450 dinars from 300 and a kilogramme of dry beans surged to 800 dinars.

Traders said demand for foodstuffs was very high as more and more people were relying on the open market after the government decided to slash rations by as much as 50 per cent last year.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY MARCH 6, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Follow only accepted rules for handling any problem you may have this morning whether private or otherwise and avoid trouble that may develop from it. Things go better in the evening.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) A good day for you to be with influential persons who can help you in your line of endeavour. Take no chances with your health, especially during this time.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A new project you have in mind needs more research before it can be put into operation. Allow time to engage in your favourite hobby for peace of mind.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You may be thinking you're not progressing as you should this morning but keep plugging away and you will gain your goal in a very big way. Show others that you have confidence.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Listen to the advice of a family tie this morning who has your best interest at heart. Make long range plans for the days ahead and any projects you are involved in will be successful.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A good day to visit friends and relatives for mutual enjoyment. Be more precise in handling your personal affairs and you will get all you deserve.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Forget a worrisome affair and delve into something more practical and profitable this afternoon. Make plans to improve your social life by going out with a loved one.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) A good day to study facts and figures so you can advance in career activities. Strive for increase harmony at home through the kindness of others.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Contact friends in the afternoon and discuss an important plan you have in mind. Allow time for recreational activities later in the day and into the evening.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) A perfect day for getting out to new activities and perking up your enthusiasm. Relax at home tonight and enjoy the week ahead.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Listening to the suggestions of an expert can be most helpful to you now. Make this a most worthwhile day for all those who reside with you.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Follow your hunches early in the day, because they are likely to be off-target later on. Take no risks with your reputation or you will fall behind the eight ball.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

THE Daily Crossword by Betty Jorgensen

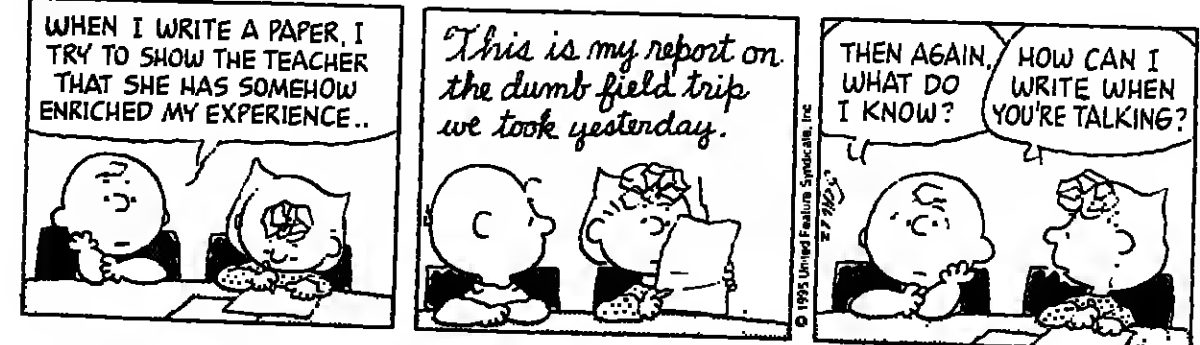
ACROSS

- 1 Foul slave
- 2 Cotton picker
- 3 Green traffic ticket
- 4 David's delight
- 5 Run off to wed
- 6 Mother of Romaine and Romaine
- 7 Carry on
- 8 Conclude
- 9 Stir up
- 10 Colour of
- 11 Peet
- 12 Berman
- 13 Active art piece
- 14 Road shoulders
- 15 Prayer word
- 16 American diplomat, stars
- 17 Address Arthur
- 18 Carry on
- 19 Term
- 20 Mean
- 21 Horrible band
- 22 Reddish
- 23 Duplicates
- 24 Reels
- 25 LHM riding horses
- 26 Sao —, Brazil
- 27 Siam
- 28 Fish
- 29 Carry on
- 30 Spanish mess
- 31 Bib
- 32 Mid-term
- 33 Impolite
- 34 Shouty
- 35 Curt
- 36 Hard girl
- 37 Japanese beverage
- 38 —, go bright
- 39 Outer coating
- 40 Rags
- 41 In the past
- 42 Michael Corleone movie
- 43 Louche
- 44 Grasp or lame
- 45 Main
- 46 Mi unit
- 47 Baron and earl
- 48 g
- 49 View
- 50 President
- 51 Sandy
- 52 Team
- 53 Wise
- 54 Spoiler
- 55 Top's partner
- 56 Pub measure
- 57 Follicle
- 58 Pipeline river
- 59 Ratio of speed
- 60 To sound
- 61 Melville opus
- 62 Bound
- 63 Root vegetables
- 64 —, go bright
- 65 Doer
- 66 Dober's
- 67 Botch
- 68 First name in mystery
- 69 Celtic coolers
- 70 Hot address
- 71 Capture
- 72 Captive
- 73 —, worn (five)
- 74 Wood filler
- 75 Anne Colley
- 76 Take the lead
- 77 50 Mystery item
- 78 Name in suits
- 79 Changes color
- 80 54 Soup
- 81 55 Uzzie Borden's weapon
- 82 Works by Klee

DOWN

- 1 Foul slave
- 2 Cotton picker
- 3 Green traffic ticket
- 4 David's delight
- 5 Run off to wed
- 6 Mother of Romaine and Romaine
- 7 Carry on
- 8 Conclude
- 9 Stir up
- 10 Colour of
- 11 Peet
- 12 Berman
- 13 Active art piece
- 14 Road shoulders
- 15 Prayer word
- 16 American diplomat, stars
- 17 Address Arthur
- 18 Carry on
- 19 Term
- 20 Mean
- 21 Horrible band
- 22 Reddish
- 23 Duplicates
- 24 Reels
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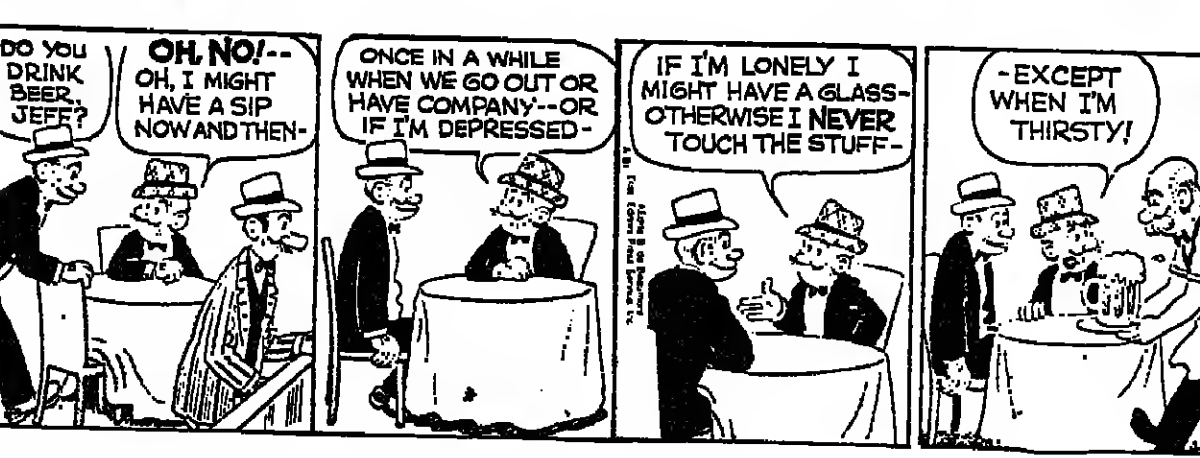
eanuts



Andy Capp



Andy Capp



Andy Capp

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles. One letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GYNAT
ANCK
CEADED
THOGTE

Answer: AN OF

Yesterday's Jumbles: USURP GUIDE IMPACT POLLEN
Answer: The voters regarded the young candidate as — "PROMISING"

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

"I was kissing my wife and I had to burp really bad. Suddenly it blasted right out my ears!"

Business & Finance

business daily beat
A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Australia eyes Jordan as centre for reexporting livestock, meat

The Australian Ministry of Trade has plans to make Jordan a centre for reexporting livestock and meat and distributing it in the region and to East Asia. Proposed studies point to setting up large centres with highly effective storage capacity capable of slaughtering 5,000 heads of sheep and 400 calves per day. The plans also include establishing a free zone for keeping and packing meat and reexporting it through Jordan. The proposed centres and slaughterhouses would be totally financed by Australia (Al Ra'i).

The board of directors of the Ports Corporation is demanding an amendment to charges of tugboats at the port of Aqaba. According to engineer Agel Abu Tayeh, the corporation's deputy general manager, it has become necessary to review and amend the charges of tugboats especially with the rise in operational costs such as the price of diesel, oil, spare parts and insurance in addition to higher cost of repair and maintenance. He explained that the two tugboats which the Ports Corporation bought from the U.S. required a large number of staff to operate them round the clock. Noting that a staff of four captains, four engineers, 12 mechanics and 12 sailors were needed to operate the tugboats and that the charges have remained the same since 1983, Mr. Abu Tayeh said the financial burden was continuously growing.

Mr. Abu Tayeh noted that at the port of Suez charges were much higher as the authorities there charge \$550 for a small tugboat for three hours and \$750 for large tugboats. At Aqaba, the corporation charges JD 50 per hour which was described by Mr. Tayeh as a very small amount compared to neighbouring ports. The board of directors proposed to the minister of transport raising the tugboat charges to between JD 100 to JD 300 according to the types and sizes of vessels. Captain Ibrahim Abu Sheikh, director of the maritime department, said that if the situation remains unchanged, the losses incurred by the corporation will double over the coming years. He pointed out that it has become necessary to conduct a serious study on the corporation's demands to avoid more losses (Al Aswaq).

All Farid Al Saad was elected chairman of board of directors of the Jordan Tobacco and Cigarettes Company, replacing his father who passed away last year. Mr. Saad is also the general manager of the company (Al Aswaq).

Mousa Zaki Al Ayyoubi, a prominent industrialist and businessman, passed away last week. He owned Al Ayyoubi Metal Furniture Factory (Al Aswaq).

THE MEMBERSHIP at the Zarqa Chamber of Commerce increased from 10,746 members at the end of 1993 to 12,928 members at the end of 1994. The chamber issued 4,453 certificates of origin or various Jordanian products manufactured in the Zarqa region. The chamber also issued 3,531 of various other certificates and verified 6,699 guarantees for all kinds of purposes (Al Ra'i).

The annual report of the engineers' association shows that 2,122 engineers in various fields registered at the association last year bringing the total number of engineers in the Kingdom up to 32,928. At the end of 1994, there were 1,126 engineering offices and companies operating in the country. These entities employed 3,200 graphic designers and 1,550 supervisors. The association projects JD 782,760 in revenues and JD 903,900 in expenditures for this year (Al Aswaq).

Battle for corpse of Barings enters final phase

AMSTERDAM (R) — The battle for Barings entered its final phase on Sunday but administrators said no decision was imminent on which of the two Dutch rivals would win what was left of the British investment bank.

Dutch bank ABN Amro and financial services group ING are vying for the corpse of Barings, which collapsed a week ago, and court-appointed administrators of the 233-year-old institution said talks were continuing.

"The negotiations are ongoing. There are two parties in the frame. The administrators have said in the last 10 minutes that there will be no imminent announcement," a spokesman for administrators, accountants Ernst Young, told Reuters.

ING (Internationale Nederlanden Groep N.V.) said it had yet to make a formal bid for but hoped to make up its mind soon whether to do so or withdraw from the contest.

We hope to decide (whether to bid for Barings) today. Everyone wants a swift solution. We will probably be in a position to say one way or the other this afternoon or tonight," said spokesman Roud Polet in Amsterdam.

All parties would like to find a solution for the bank, its clients and its 4,000 staff as quickly as possible but Mr. Polet said it was possible there would be no announcement before Monday.

The search for a buyer of Britain's oldest merchant bank began last week after it discovered \$1.0 billion in losses racked up by Singapore-based trader Nick Leeson.

The 28-year-old Londoner has been detained in Germany while Singapore authorities seek his extradition for alleged forgery.

ING has been working since Thursday on a plan to buy all of Barings, including its losses, for just £1 (\$1.60).

ABN Amro said Saturday it had made a formal joint offer to buy parts of Barings with U.S. broker Smith Barney.

A spokesman for the Net herlands' biggest bank said Sunday it was still waiting to find out if its bid had won.

He gave no details of the offer but bank sources say it wants Barings' corporate finance and asset management arms and would sell Barings Securities to Smith Barney.

Mr. Leeson, the financial trader blamed for breaking Britain's oldest merchant bank, spent his first weekend

in a German jail cell as his lawyer said Sunday forgery charges levelled against him were "thin."

Eberhard Kempf, the Frankfurt lawyer representing Mr. Leeson against Singapore's bid to extradite the 28-year-old former Barings trader, said he did not expect his client to appear again in court before Wednesday.

"I am indeed extremely critical of the decisions so far because the accusation of forging documents is in my opinion an excuse as it does not refer to the actual accusations," Mr. Kempf told Reuters in an interview.

"It could well be that the actual accusations made against Mr. Leeson cannot be so clearly proven legally," he said.

Mr. Kempf said Leeson's wife, Lisa Jane Sims, had returned to Britain. She was released by German authorities Thursday shortly after the couple were detained at Frankfurt airport following a six-day international manhunt for Mr. Leeson.

A judge ruled Friday that initial information on forgery allegations produced by Singapore authorities was sufficient for him to be detained.

A lawyer from the London law firm Kingsley Napley is expected to arrive in Frankfurt this week, but Mr. Kempf said it was unclear whether a foreign lawyer could meet Mr. Leeson in prison.

Singapore has 40 days to make a formal application to Germany for the extradition of Mr. Leeson, blamed for trading losses of \$900 million which destroyed the 233-year-old Barings Bank.

Mr. Kempf said Mr. Leeson would rather be moved to England, but British officials have not sought his extradition.

The initial charge against

Mr. Leeson is that he forged a document confirming the payment of \$81 million into a Citibank Singapore account in the name of Baring Futures.

The alleged forgery was aimed at deceiving Barings Futures into believing that the money had been paid into the bank's account by a U.S. company, according to documents given to Frankfurt prosecutors.

Mr. Kempf, who has said his client denied the forgery charge and would fight extradition to Singapore, said prosecutors had not yet presented information concern-

ing wider allegations of fraud involving risky trades in Japanese stock futures.

The lawyer said he expected Singapore authorities to present more information this week to the Frankfurt court, in an attempt to incorporate new allegations into the extradition request.

"From what I have heard in the press, there are further accusations being prepared against him," Mr. Kempf said.

He said he did not expect Mr. Leeson to appear before German authorities until Wednesday at the earliest, noting "the German authorities will want to handle this in a quiet manner."

In Singapore, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said Sunday the collapsed Barings group had suffered as the result of a lack of internal control.

Mr. Goh, who was speaking after meeting with Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating, said "looking at the reports from the investigation, we felt that we (Singapore's regulatory authorities) have done very well."

Mr. Goh said there was "essentially an internal problem in the Barings group, a lack of control."

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
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ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (25/02/1995 - 01/03/1995)				
WEEKLY REPORT				
COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PIG	131,435	188.750	188.750	188.750
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	152,140	4.500	4.500	4.550
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	33,004	4.350	4.350	4.370
CATRO AMMAN BANK	6,574,285	5.000	5.000	4.750
BANK OF JORDAN	3,811	3.400	3.400	3.600
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	525,890	1.540	1.540	1.520
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	3,077	2.780	2.780	2.750
THE HOUSING BANK	57,805	6.060	6.060	6.120
JORDAN KUNAIT BANK	48,467	3.000	3.000	3.000
JORDAN GOLF BANK	43,125	1.400	1.400	1.370
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	5,469,645	4.000	4.000	3.910
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	58,800	5.100	5.100	4.900
BUSINESS BANK	94,328	3.520	3.520	3.500
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	45,299	4.090	4.090	4.050
BEIT KHALAL SAVING INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	4,440	3.150	3.150	3.200
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	201,300	1.290	1.290	1.290
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	6,752	4.150	4.150	4.150
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	13,123	1.430	1.430	1.440
BANKS SECTOR		12957121	INDEX NUMBER: 161.40	CHANGE: -0.07%
JORDAN INSURANCE	49,901	3.400	3.400	3.400
MIDDLE EAST INSURANCE	866,250	3.500	3.500	3.500
ARABIAN SEAS INSURANCE	1,000	1.900	1.900	2.000
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	6,841	2.550	2.550	2.520
YAMOUK INSURANCE & REINSURANCE	27,900	3.150	3.150	3.100
DELTA INSURANCE	1,118	1.350	1.350	1.360
INSURANCE SECTOR		973252	INDEX NUMBER: 137.02	CHANGE: -0.03%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	50,580	1.550	1.550	1.600
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	153,952	1.500	1.500	1.530
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	7,533	6.640	6.640	6.900
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	4,992	4.950	4.950	4.900
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	40,380	3.420	3.420	3.440
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	14,081	2.350	2.350	2.350
ARAB REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	84	1.220	1.220	1.200
JORDAN PRAS FOUNDATION / ALRAI	7,001	12.000	12.000	12.750
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODOR HOTELS	100,493	2.350	2.350	2.370
ARAB INVEST. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	27,700	3.510	3.510	3.490
SERVICES SECTOR		427441	INDEX NUMBER: 133.50	CHANGE: +0.80%
JORDAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	10,988	34.500	34.500	34.300
ATTANQURH CORST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	523	1.350	1.350	1.250
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	230,122	3.050	3.050	3.020
JORDAN PROSPERITY MINES	474	2.750	2.750	2.750
THE ARAB POTASH/NEW	2,250	5.000	5.000	5.000
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	39,614	9.450	9.450	9.420
INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL		7,625	4.000	3.900
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	38,784	7.700	7.700	7.650
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	342,107	4.740	4.740	4.650
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	1,200	6.040	6.040	6.000
JORDAN DAIRY	1,037	2.100	2.100	2.050
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	13,077	2.700	2.700	2.480
THE PUBLIC MINTING	824	2.910	2.910	2.850
SPINNING & WEAVING	2,657	2.550	2.550	2.530
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	44,022	2.910	2.910	2.930
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	176,246	8.000	8.000	7.960
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	15,580	0.970	0.970	0.990
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	10,365	6.720	6.720	6.700
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	28,543	0.770	0.770	0.790
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	1,200	1.430	1.430	1.450
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	6,975	2.470	2.470	2.300
JORDAN ROPEWORK INDUSTRIES	3,046	1.350	1.350	1.320
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & WATCH/INCO	3,110	0.770	0.770	0.780
JORDAN CEMENT & WIRE MANUFACTURING	8,120	4.800	4.800	4.750
JORDAN SUBPHOS-CHROMALS	3,027	1.710	1.710	1.480
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	12,718	2.650	2.650	2.650
KAMTER INVESTMENT	3,100	1.680	1.680	1.650
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	43,825	4.200	4.200	4.130
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	54,072	2.090	2.090	2.120
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR		1118240	INDEX NUMBER: 124.09	CHANGE: -0.78%
GRAND TOTAL		15476254	INDEX NUMBER: 143.99	CHANGE: -0.78%
PARALLEL MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (25/02/1995 - 01/03/1995)				
WEEKLY REPORT				
COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
CENTRAL GENERAL TRADING & STORAGE	58,486	0.960	0.960	0.940
JORDAN TRADE FACILITIES	9,697	0.800	0.800	0.800
KARMA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	97,342	1.470	1.470	1.500
UNITED CO. FOR ORGANISING LAND TRANS.	53,789	2.290	2.290	2.240
ARAB FIN. INV. CO.	50,759	1.010	1.010	1.020
ARAB FOOD & MEDICAL APPLIANCES	4,104	1.100	1.100	1.050
NATIONAL CHLORINE INDUSTRIES CO. LTD	20,407	1.700	1.700	1.740
NATIONAL TEXTILE & PLASTICS IND. CO	21,442	1.130	1.130	1.150
JORDAN NEW CEMENT COMPANY	30,921	1.710	1.710	1.720
NATIONAL MULTIPLE INDUSTRIES	99,908	1.210	1.210	1.270
EL-RAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	16,321	2.250	2.250	2.250
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	51,592	1.570	1.570	1.630
UNIVERSAL METALS	5,250	1.750	1.750	1.750
NATIONAL ENGINEERING INDUSTRIES	81,527	1.230	1.230	1.280
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL INDUSTRY	7,103	2.400	2.400	2.580
JORDAN STEEL	68,739	0.990	0.990	1.000
ARAB ELECTRIC INDUSTRIES	8,434	1.000	1.000	0.960
GRAND TOTAL		668040		

Israel to participate in Egyptian trade fair

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — Israel will participate in Egypt's annual trade fair for the first time since 1986, when gunmen killed an Israeli embassy employee and wounded three others as they left the fairgrounds.

Israel will be represented by about 40 companies, mainly in the agricultural field.

"We think it is a very important fair, and it shows how much economic and trade relations have developed," said Yaacov Setty, press officer at the Israeli embassy.

Egyptian officials say some 40 countries have said they will participate in the fair from March 18 to March 30. More are expected to register after this weekend's Eid El Fitr feast, marking the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, they said.

Nine years ago, gunmen from a group calling itself Egypt's Revolution opened fire on a car carrying Israelis who had been working at the Jewish state's pavilion at Fairgrounds, which is in Cairo's Nasr City suburb.

According to Mr. Setty, Israel had planned to participate in the fair last year but decided to withdraw after an attack on Feb. 25, 1994, in which a Jewish settler opened fire on Muslims praying in the West Bank town of Hebron, killing 30.

In 1989, Egypt cancelled the fair, citing "technical problems." But Israel maintained that Egypt cancelled to avoid getting caught between Israel's request to participate and possible wrath from Arab countries opposed to normalizing relations with the Jewish state.

Although Israel is invited this year, there have been no reports of Arab cancellations.

Among the Arab states expected to participate are Syria, Libya, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, Egyptian officials say.

Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, the first Arab state to do so. Relations have been correct but cool. Last year the Jewish state signed a treaty with Jordan.

Fokker to slash 2,000 jobs

AMSTERDAM (AFP) — Aeroaustrial firm Fokker, the Dutch subsidiary of Germany's Daimler Benz Aerospace (Dasa), has said it is slashing 1,975 of its 8,500 workforce.

In a statement, Fokker said it was taking the measure to "reestablish the firm's profitability in 1996" and "reinforce its position as world market leader for regional transport planes."

Company chairman Ben van Schalk said most of the jobs would go during this year to leave a total workforce of 6,660 by mid-1996.

He added a further 400 jobs could go if the company managed to sell off Fokker Space Systems as planned, saying the present round of cuts was being carried out so the firm would not "be confronted in the short-term with a need for further downsizing."

The job losses include 215 posts already set to go in a shake up of the firm and a further 650 posts in the company's factor at Ypenburg near the Hague, which is to close.

The Ypenburg site, which produces plane interior fittings, has 65 per cent overcapacity.

The head of the factory's consultative committee last week offered to buy the site for the symbolic sum of one guilder, saying the move to close Ypenburg amounted to "amputating" a healthy sector of the firm.

The job cuts, which will hit engineers for the first time, will be made through "merging and contracting out certain activities," the firm revealed.

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Jordan's U-18 basketball team reaches Asian quarterfinals

By Omar Bashawi in Manila and Aileen Bannayan in Amman

JORDAN'S under-18 national basketball team qualified to the quarterfinals of 13th Asian Youth Basketball Championship currently underway in Manila after finishing second in Group B which included Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea.

The only Arab team in the 15-nation competition, Jordan scored a crushing 71-24 win over Hong Kong and then beat Singapore 88-35 before losing to top-ranked South Korea 75-61.

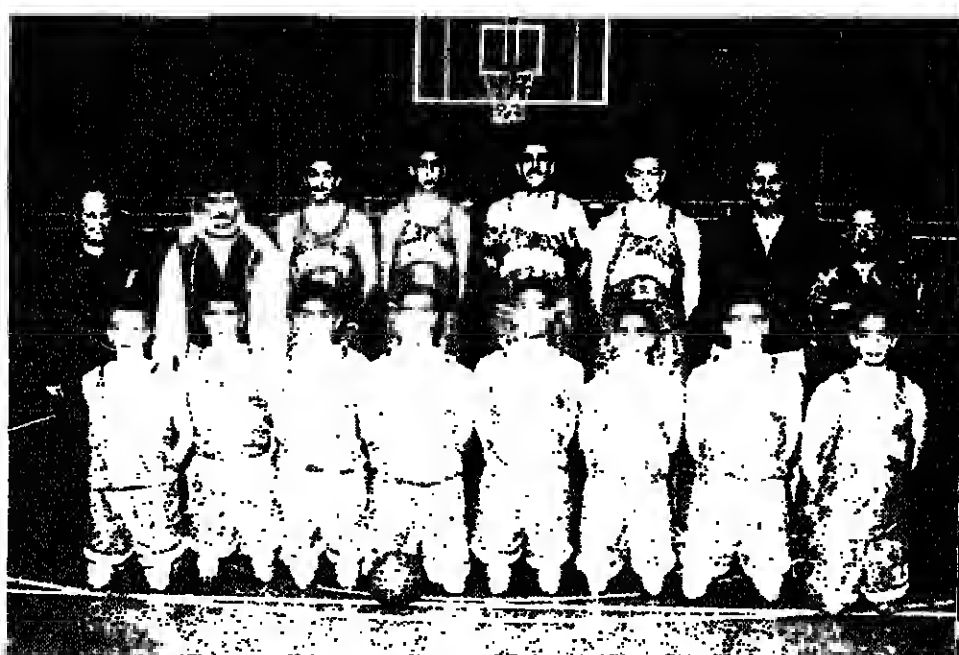
With two victories in three games, the Jordanian team joined a quarterfinal group that also includes China, the Philippines and Japan.

The other quarterfinalist group includes South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and Taiwan.

The 15 participating teams had been divided into four groups. The top two teams in each group made it to the quarterfinals. The rest of the teams will now play for 9th-15th positions.

Jordan will play the Philippines today (Monday), then face China on Tuesday and Japan on Wednesday.

Despite losing to Korea, Jordan's head coach Murad Barakat said he was satisfied with the team's overall results and said he expected a better form in the



The Kingdom's U-18 team

quarterfinal round. "We were unlucky. But taking into consideration that our team was only recently re-grouped and is lacking the necessary experience, they proved that they are a serious, promising group."

Jordan-South Korea: South Korea topped Group B with the win over Jordan. Jordan's Ma'an Odeh, Zeid Alkhas and Ashraf Samara on whom the team depends for rebounding and scoring were hampered by personal fouls in this match — a fact which greatly affected their team-mates.

Jordan's top scorers

were: Odeh 16, Alkhas 15 and Samara 13.

Jordan-Hong Kong: In the match against Hong Kong, Jordan's players set the pace and limited their opponents scoring ability.

Mahmoud Sha'ban, who had excelled in friendly matches in Syria and Amman prior to the championship seemed to be having a bad day as he was not among the team's top players. Alkhas had 19 points, Samara 11, Ihab Insih 10, Odeh 9.

Jordan-Singapore: The Jordanian team played a better game against Singa-

pore. Sha'ban had 7 points and Samara, who has proved to be one of the top players, had the most effective overall percentages of the team.

The top scorers were again similar: Alkhas 22, Insih 20, Samara 12. In other matches from the competition Thailand became the last team to reach the quarterfinals after a 76-66 win over Malaysia. Thailand had also trounced Brunei 93-40 Saturday.

Japan came from behind for a 72-62 victory over Kazakhstan, but later lost to Taiwan.

Top ref in bribe probe

LONDON (AFP) — Former top referee Ken Aston claimed he was approached by a Far East betting syndicate to help fix English Premiership matches, according to a newspaper report here on Sunday.

Aston, a former chairman of FIFA's refereeing committee and a member of the International Board, claims he was offered 25,000 pounds by two representatives of a syndicate to pass on names, addresses and telephone numbers of the country's top players and referees.

A report in the Sunday Express said Aston immediately reported the approach to the Football Association on February 11, who in turn informed the police.

Aston, who refereed the 1963 FA Cup final between Manchester United and Leicester as well as a number of international matches, claims he was approached in a Singapore restaurant by two Indians.

He said the two men promised to pay cash for the information they believed would help them rake in up to 2.7 million pounds from a betting stake of around 450,000.

"They now accept bribing just one player is not enough," Aston is quoted as saying. "They want to have more than one in their pocket, and a referee too."

Fernandez looks to end career at '96 Olympics

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Gigi Fernandez is the world's top-ranked doubles player, an Olympic gold medalist and the best female player ever to come out of Latin America. But after 12 years of pro tennis, she is about ready to call it quits.

"Not a lot of players enjoy the success I have enjoyed," she said while playing at the \$160,000 Puerto Rico Open, the one tournament title that has eluded her. "But I think it's time to think about the future. So I'm shooting to end my career after the Olympics in Atlanta and then enjoy life after tennis."

The 31-year-old San Juan native was ousted from her hometown event Saturday by 20-year-old Japanese player Kyoko Nagatsuka.

"I'm very disappointed. I wanted to win this tournament, not so much for the fans, but for myself," she said. "I really have a lot of things to think about."

Over the last five years, Fernandez has teamed up with Belarus' Natasba

Zvereva to win an unprecedented nine straight Grand Slam titles. Prior to that she had teamed up with Robin White and Navratilova to win U.S. Open crowns in 1988 and 1990, respectively.

In singles play, she was ranked as high as 17th in the world and last year was a semifinal at Wimbledon and a quarterfinalist at the U.S. Open.

Fernandez's road to stardom, however, has been full of potholes.

In 1991, when her native Puerto Rico earned the right to field a Federation Cup team, she chose to play for the U.S. her decision angered many of her fans, here, to the point that officials from the Puerto Rico Olympic Committee wanted to sanction her.

Her volatile oncourt personality angered tour officials and several players have found her "hard to get along with."

"I set all my goals for myself. I can't keep myself busy thinking about, and reacting to, what other peo-

ple say," she said. "I know I've had my problems, but I feel a lot different now. I feel I'm more controlled."

When Fernandez shocked the tennis world by reaching the Wimbledon semifinals last year, she found herself on Centre Court with none other than Navratilova, who was Navratilova's farewell match at Wimbledon.

Fernandez says that marked a turnaround in her career.

"It was then that I learned how to deal with pressure," Fernandez said. "I actually felt comfortable on Centre Court against Martina. I realized that having fun is the most important of the game."

Since then, she has made a point to enjoy herself on the court. When she used to fight with officials and throw rackets, she now shrugs everything off with a smile and keeps playing.

After her loss to Nagatsuka, Fernandez did not want to say much. She just walked away with a wave.

"Maybe I'll see you next year," she said.



Natasba Zvereva

Zvereva stays calm to beat Sanchez

INDIAN WELLS, California (Agencies) — A victory over the world's top-ranked player is always sweet and there was no hiding her elation when Natasba Zvereva of Belarus beat Arantxa Sanchez 7-5, 6-3 in the semi-finals of the WTA's \$300,000 Evert Cup here Saturday.

But she admitted she had needed to stay calm on court.

Zvereva, who has asked to be called Natasba instead of Natalia because she considers it a "friendlier" first name, now plays either Mary Joe Fernandez of the United States or Naoko Sawamatsu of Japan's Naoko Sawamatsu 6-4, 6-1.

"I got so excited trying to keep calm, trying to wait for the kill," said Zvereva. "I know how excited I can get, so I tried to stay calm and it worked. Usually I get too excited and go for too much in the beginning."

"This time I set a plan. I knew it was the best tactic," Zvereva's victory keeps Sanchez waiting for a first title this year.

"She played really good shots," Sanchez admitted after the match.

"I was down and didn't come back. Maybe I didn't serve as good as usual and missed more shots. You have to be ready because she goes for the shots. I forced more than normal. But I didn't lose it. She won it."

Zvereva's decision to be aggressive forced the world's top player into uncharacteristic errors.

"I couldn't play as well as I wanted," said Sanchez.

"I knew I had to come up more and put pressure on her. She puts good angles on the ball and she is dangerous if you let her play. I need to play more matches like this before I win another title."

Zvereva has lost four prior meetings with Fernandez, all in 1992.

Fernandez avenged her fourth-round loss to Sawamatsu in the Australian Open by using a switch in tactics.

"She likes the pace of the ball so I tried to mix it up, give her some lobs and slices to get her out of her rhythm, and it worked pretty well," Fernandez said.

Sawamatsu said Fernandez was more patient.

"She just played smart," Sawamatsu said. "She did exactly what she needed against me. It was not her normal game. She mixed well, so it was very difficult for me. She played different. She had a good plan for my tennis."

Krajicek sets up all-Dutch final

In Rotterdam, fifth seed Richard Krajicek made it an unprecedented all-Dutch final of the world indoor tennis tournament with a 6-3 7-5 semifinal victory over Italian

qualifier Omar Camporese.

In the final he will meet unseeded compatriot Paul Haarhuis, who saved the match points on his way to beating second seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia 5-6 7-6.

It is the first time two Dutchmen have played in a week's tournament in Stuttgart, had little problem with Camporese, winner here in 1991 but now ranked 225th, he comes back from a long-term elbow injury.

The hard-serving Dutchman needed only one set to take the first set.

After they exchanged breaks in the fifth and sixth games, Krajicek broke again in the 11th and served out the second and maintained his record of not dropping a set throughout the tournament.

Haarhuis was favoured several close line calls to the second set from Kafelnikov and force a deciding tie-break which opened with service breaks in a row.

Haarhuis saved two match points at 5-4 and one at 6-6 for a tie-break which won 7-5.

Malone scores 30 as Jazz beat Trail Blazers

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Karl Malone, questionable until game time due to a sprained right ankle, had 30 points and nine rebounds Saturday as the Utah Jazz beat the Portland Trail Blazers 98-81.

Blue Edwards scored eight of his 10 points in the fourth quarter as Utah put the game away.

The Blazers were without Rod Strickland, who sat out with a shoulder injury, and Cliff Robinson, also injured with a sprained right ankle. James Robinson led Portland with 23 points.

Knicks 89, Cavaliers 76: At Cleveland, John Starks sank seven 3-pointers and scored 29 points as the New York Knicks beat the Cleveland Cavaliers for a split of their four-game season series.

New York won for the seventh time in nine games overall in winning its fifth consecutive road game against Cleveland. Each team has beaten the other twice this year — with the road team winning all four.

New York didn't trail in the second half, and Starks sank four 3-pointers in the last five minutes. Patrick Ewing had 18 points and 13 rebounds, and Anthony Mason had 13 points and 14 rebounds for the Knicks.

The Cavs, who shot 38 per cent in losing their fourth in a row, were led by John Williams with 20 points. Michael Cage pulled down 20 rebounds.

Pacers 101, Celtics 107: At Indianapolis, Dino Radja scored 23 points as the Boston Celtics sent the Indiana Pacers to their third straight loss.

The victory snapped Indiana's 12-game home winning streak against the Celtics. Boston's last win at Market Square arena was March 16, 1989.

Byron Scott led Indiana with 21 points off the bench. Reggie Miller and Vern Fleming added 15 apiece.

The Celtics survived a fourth quarter rally by Indiana that reduced an 18-point lead to nine. Derek Strong scored seven of his 10 points in the fourth to secure the victory.

Bulls 106, 76ers 94: At Philadelphia, Toni Kukoc



Detroit Pistons' Grant Hill #33 slam the basketball through the net in front of teammate Oliver Miller (AFP photo)

scored 21 points as the Chicago Bulls snapped a three-game road losing streak by beating the Philadelphia 76ers.

Chicago managed only its third road win in its last 12

games. Philadelphia, led by Dana Barros with 26 points, lost for the fifth time in seven games.

Scottie Pippen added 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Bulls. Will Perdue had 15

points and 12 rebounds. Ron Harper added 15 and Steve Kerr 12.

Pistons 98, Mavericks 91: At Dallas, Joe Dumars recovered from a scoreless first

half to score 19 points and Allan Houston added 16 as the Detroit Pistons halted a nine-game road losing streak with a win over the Dallas Mavericks.

Oliver Miller had 17 points and 10 rebounds and Grant Hill added 15 for the Pistons.

Jamal Mashburn's 22 points and Roy Tarpley's 18 paced the Mavericks, who saw their two-game winning streak end.

The game was tied 80-80 when Dumars took control, hitting a 2.5 metres with 7:11 left and converting two free throws with 6:45 to play to give Detroit an 84-80 advantage and the Mavericks couldn't get any closer.

Nuggets 101, Clippers 89: At Los Angeles, Dikembe Mutombo had 21 points and 16 rebounds Saturday night as the Denver Nuggets held off the Clippers' fourth-quarter rally to beat Los Angeles 101-89.

The Nuggets, who won their third straight, led by 21 points at 80-59 on Tom Hammond's basket with 8:55 to play.

But the lowly Clippers reeled off 23 of the next 33 points and cut Denver's lead to 90-82 on Lamond Murray's slam dunk with 2:34 left.

Dale Ellis kept Los Angeles at bay with a 4.5 metre jumper to put the lead back to 10, and the Nuggets breezed home. Ellis had 15 points off the bench while Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf added 16 for Denver.

STANDINGS

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Orlando	44	14	.759	—
New York	37	19	.661	6
Boston	24	33	.421	19½
New Jersey	22	36	.379	22
Miami	21	35	.375	22
Philadelphia	17	41	.293	27
Washington	15	41	.268	28

Central Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Charlotte	37	21	.638	—
Indiana	34	23	.596	2½
Cleveland	33	24	.579	3½
Chicago	29	30	.492	8½
Atlanta	28	29	.491	8½
Detroit	22	35	.386	14½
Milwaukee	22	36	.379	15

Western Conference

Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Utah	42	16	.724	—
San Antonio	38	16	.704	2
Houston	35	22	.614	6½
Denver	26	31	.456	15½
Dallas	22	33	.400	18½
Minnesota	16	41	.281	25½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Phoenix	44	14	.759	—
Seattle	38	17	.691	4½
L.A. Lakers	35	20	.636	7½
Portland	39	25	.545	12½
Sacramento	28	27	.509	14½
Golden State	16	39	.291	26½
L.A. Clippers	11	48	.186	33½

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1) Beverly Hills Cop 3 (Eddie Murphy)	★ Money, I Blew Up The Kid ★ The Lion King	Comedian star: Adel Imam — Bakhit & Andadileh	Mousa Hijazin "Sumaah" In the political comedy "Hi Citizen"	Presents Abu Awwad In the social comedy Punctured Bag	Presents: The political satire: AL SALAM YA SALAM at 8:30 p.m.	
2) Tom & Jerry	Morning and Noon Shows TimeCop Evening Shows	Shows: 11:30, 1, 3:30, 6, 8:30, 11	Author and Director: Mohammad Al Shawaqfeh Daily starting 8:30 p.m.	The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day	For reservation, please call 625155	The theatre is closed on Saturdays & Sundays
	Shows: 11:00, 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.	Shows: 11:30, 1:45, 3:15, 5:15, 11:15	Monday is the weekly holiday			

Sports

Michael Johnson betters indoor 400m world mark

ATLANTA (AFP) — Michael Johnson ran an indoor world record of 44.63secs to win the 400m at the U.S. Indoor Athletics Championships Saturday — his 40th consecutive victory at the distance.

The American improved on the world record of 44.97 that he set in Reno, Nevada, on February 10.

"I didn't feel that I could do it on the track at Reno. I would have predicted that I could do it here," Johnson said.

Despite his success this winter, Johnson said he considered it all a warm-up for the outdoor season.

"Anything I've done indoors hasn't brought any new revelations for me," said Johnson, whose outdoor best is 43.65.

"I'm very confident about what I can do outdoors. I think a 43-flat is possible for me, and I thought that before this indoor season."

Johnson, running in lane two, was unchallenged from the gun, reaching the 200m mark in 21.08. Derek Mills of the United States was second in 45.59, and Darnell Hall was third in 45.61.

Though the championships are the U.S. qualifying meet for the indoor World Championships in Barcelona, with the top two finishers in each event qualifying, Johnson said he would not make the trip to Spain.

Instead he will return home to Texas and start preparing for the outdoor season.

American Alton Johnson, who coded world champ Colin Jackson's hurdles winning streak on February 9 in Mad-

rid, won the 60m hurdles in 7.42. Mark Crear was second in 7.49 and Jack Pierce was third in 7.58.

He too, crossed the line with plenty of room to spare. "I felt like a thousand pounds was lifted off my shoulders," he said. "This is a big meet for me. I've never won any major titles in the U.S. To win a major title is important — you can always run fast."

He said his recent experience of running Europe had helped him immensely.

"It helped me a lot," he said. "I ran against Tony Jarrett, Colin Jackson some of the world's top hurdlers."

He said he would make the trip to Barcelona, before turning his attention to the outdoor season.

Joyner Kersee on track for double

Three time Olympic gold medalist Jackie Joyner Kersee was showing no signs of slowing down at the U.S. indoor athletics championships Saturday, a day after celebrating her 33rd birthday.

Joyner Kersee, seeking the hurdles and long jump double that eluded her at this meet last year, led her opening heat in the 60m hurdles, the event she lost because of a fall in 1994.

She said the extra semi-final round, in which she also won her heat, made the event more difficult.

"It's a lot of wear and tear on the body," she said. "Last year there were only two rounds."

In addition, she said the temptation to take it easy early could be dangerous. She said her fall last year, which handed the victory to

Jamaican Michelle Freeman, was partly the result of a sudden step up in intensity for the final.

"I need to do things differently this year," she said. "I've got to keep that quickness."

Olympic women's 200m champion Gwen Torrence unwillingly continued her pursuit of a 200m-60m double.

After qualifying for the 200m final on Friday, she had hoped to withdraw from the 60m, but was told she would be scratched from both if she did.

They said I had to run the 60m scratch the 200, so I am," she said, though she and her husband-coach Manley Waller were still not sure she would complete both finals.

"Manley just said to run them one race at a time," Torrence said. "If I get too sore, we'll just have to see, but I feel OK now."

"It's crazy to run four times in one day. I wish they would have had at least one of the 60s yesterday. I hope I survive."

In early finals on Saturday, Gwen Wentland won the women's high jump with a height of 1.96m. Hueter won the shot with a throw of 21.05. World record holder Randy Barnes was seventh.

Michelle Robi won the women's 3000m walk in 13:04.99, and Allen James won the men's 500m walk in 20:16.47.

Jamaican Michael Green was the fastest qualifier for the men's 60m final with a time of 6.54 seconds. Henry Neal, the 25-year-old Texan who dominated the event in the Mobil Indoor Grand Prix this year, was ousted in the semi-finals.

Street scores downhill hat-trick

SAALBACH, Austria (R) — Picabo Street of the United States whopped with joy as she won her third successive Women's Alpine Skiing World Cup downhill race Sunday, her fourth of the season.

Street threw up her hands and shouted in elation as she looked at the clock displaying a time of one minute 37.87 seconds after she screeched down the 2,520 metre-long Schneekristal course with a vertical drop of 705 metres.

But she became silent as she watched Isolde Kostner, starting four places behind, set the best intermediate time, and sighed with relief when the Italian finished second 0.16 seconds behind in 1:38.03, the same time as Russian Varvara Zelenskaya.

The downhill ended in an upset for overall World Cup leader Katja Seizinger, who finished only 27th, as she watched her overall lead over defending World Cup holder Vreni Schneider dwindle to a mere 22 points after the Swiss finished a surprise eighth.

Seizinger still has a chance of regaining the momentum if she does well in a Super-G later on Sunday, but Schneider said her good placing had given her a new surge of confidence that she could defend her overall World Cup.

"It is still a very close, but I would like to win the world cup again," an elated Schneider said after the race.

"I was a bit surprised to win today, but I gave it all I had and went out," an elated Street said. "I was a bit nervous when I saw Isolde's intermediate time, but then I relaxed again."

Violent conduct, 12 minutes after Vinney Samways had got his marching orders following an off the hall incident.

Everton manager Joe Royle could barely conceal his anger after seeing two vital points in the relegation battle thrown away.

Royle said: "The two players cost us — two brain failures. We were cruising with a double handful and in the end we were scrapping for a point."

"We've missed out on two points but, more importantly, we'll be missing these two players for games."

But it was an unhappy day for Everton's controversial Scot Duncan Ferguson, who was sent off for the second time in six weeks in the 2-2 draw at bottom-place Leicester.

Ferguson became the second Everton man to be dismissed in the game. He went in the 61st minute for

Foreman stripped of WBA belt

ATLANTIC CITY (AP) — George Foreman lost the WBA heavyweight championship Saturday in a meeting room at the Taj Mahal.

The WBA executive committee voted to reject the 46-year-old Foreman's appeal that it sanction his April 22 fight against unranked Axel Schulz of Germany. The vote count was not revealed.

The committee backed up a 5-0 vote by the WBA's championships committee Jan. 27 that Foreman make his first title defence against the top available contender or have his title recognition withdrawn by the organisation.

James Binns of the WBA said that Foreman had until Sunday to comply, which meant that the title will be declared vacant.

Foreman said Saturday: "All I know is, I do believe in Nov. 7 I became the heavyweight champion of the world. It wasn't given to me as a gift. I had to go to court to make sure I was allowed to fight, so there's no telling what court battle lurks behind the curtain now."

"I guess certain guys can be heavyweight champion of the world and do whatever they want but they seem to pick on George Foreman for some reason. But I don't feel sorry for myself because I am the heavyweight champion of the world. If I'd been in this position and not heavyweight

of the world I would be upset but I like the position I'm in and I like it today."

Tony Tucker, ranked No. 1, and Bruce Seldon, No. 2, will fight for the WBA championship. Both are promoted Don King.

Foreman won the WBA and IBF titles by knocking out Michael Moorer in the 10th round Nov. 5 at the MGM Grand at Las Vegas. The IBF will sanction Foreman's fight against Schulz at the Grand.

Foreman and promoter Bob Arum have indicated that they would take court action against the WBA if it didn't sanction the Schulz fight.

Foreman said in a statement read Saturday by promoter Butch Lewis, asked by the fighter to represent him at the appeal hearing, that if the WBA allowed him to fight Schulz, he would "defend the title against the challenger designated by the WBA later this year."

Foreman also said he would retire late this year or early in 1996.

"If ever an exception to the rule should be applied, it should be applied to George Foreman," Lewis said in asking the WBA not to withdraw championship recognition from Foreman.

"I applaud George Foreman on his accomplishment," said Tucker, a former IBF champion. "He's a great champion, but I would like the opportunity to fight for

his title."

"I'm getting old," the 28-year-old Seldon told the committee. "I would like my chance. Boxing is a very tough sport."

Arum, in a letter to the WBA, called Foreman, "one of the most important American heroes of this century."

"Popularity cannot be the test," said Rocco Depaersia, Seldon's manager. "This is not professional wrestling."

The WBC champion is Oliver McCall. He will defend his title against 45-year-old Larry Holmes April 8 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

Whitaker wins junior title

Pernell Whitaker felt Julio Cesar Vasquez's power in the fourth round but for most of the fight he was too slick for the frustrated Argentine and won the WBA junior middleweight championship on a one-sided decision Saturday night in a ballroom at the convention centre.

Whitaker was knocked down by a left hand to the head in the fourth round but he was in control to most ever other round as he became the fourth man to win at least pieces of world championships in four weight classes.

"Whitaker was very well prepared for the fight," said Vasquez, who lost for only the second time against 52 victories. "The decision was correct."

Whitaker used hard right punches to build up a big margin as the fight progressed. Vasquez also was penalised a point by referee Tony Orlando for holding behind the head in the ninth round and another point for holding and hitting behind the head in the 11th round.

Whitaker, whose WBC welterweight championship was not at stake, won 118-110 on the card of pinit prayadsah of Thailand, 118-107 on the card of John Riley of New Jersey and 116-110 on the card of Guy Jutras of Canada.

"The jab was the only punch I needed in this fight," said the 31-year-old Whitaker, who weighed 69.6 kg, the same as Vasquez. Whitaker's record now is 35-1-1 with 15 knockouts.

In another title fight before about 3,200 fans, Ike Quarte, 147, of Ghana, stopped Park Jung-Oh, 147, of South Korea, in the fourth round in defence of the WBA welterweight title.

In a 10-round welterweight match, Jacobs secured a unanimous decision over Jose Fernandez of New York.

The other fighters to win at least four titles were Sugar Ray Leonard, who won five, and Thomas Hearns and Roberto Duran, four each.

Whitaker also has held the undisputed lightweight and the IBF junior welterweight titles.

Rovers stay top as United crush Ipswich 9-0

LONDON (AFP) — A 1-0 win at Aston Villa kept Blackburn three points clear at the top of the Premiership on Saturday but Manchester United served notice that they are in no mood to concede their title with a crushing 9-0 victory over Ipswich.

Andy Cole struck four of the goals, Mark Hughes grabbed two and Roy Keane and Paul Ince added to the rout with one apiece, with United's other, strike an own goal from Ipswich defender Frank Yallop.

It was United's most powerful performance of the season and the margin of their victory matched their record 10-1 win against Wolves back in 1892.

Cole took his tally for United to six since his seven million pound move from Newcastle in January — giving him 21 goals in all this season, with 15 coming in the Premiership.

United's resounding win, which gives them a superior and possible crucial goal advantage over Blackburn, as brutal revenge for Ipswich's shock 3-2 triumph at Old Trafford in September.

Cole, who afterwards aimed that Yallop's own goal should be accredited to him, was clearly delighted to see a return to the profit making form that had made him such a hero at Newcastle.

Cole said: "I got some stick in the last week but I think I've earned them wrong again."

That was definitely the team performance I've been involved in. It gives you realise that the years here are the best in my career."

United Manager Alex Ferguson was especially pleased with the quicksilver approach that brought about the best win in his illustrious managerial career, saying:

"The movement and passing and the passion of our play was terrific all through the game."

"But today everybody was magnificent. I couldn't pick out one player whom I could only give seven or eight out of 10 to. All of them were on top of their game and you

to secure three points with a stooping header from Jason Wilcox's inswinging cross after 12 minutes.

But one goal was as good as nine for Rovers manager Kenny Dalglish, celebrating his 44th birthday.

"We're quite happy with the three points, even if the

BRITISH SOCCER

only get matches like that once in a lifetime," he added.

Victory for Blackburn, though, was not so convincing.

Alan Shearer and Chris Sutton, who have scored 49 goals between them this season, failed to get on the scoresheet for only the seventh time in 36 matches this season.

It was left to Scotland central defender Colin Hendry

performance hasn't been as good as a number of others this year," he said.

But it was an unhappy day for Everton's controversial Scot Duncan Ferguson, who was sent off for the second time in six weeks in the 2-2 draw at bottom-place Leicester.

Ferguson became the second Everton man to be dismissed in the game. He went in the 61st minute for

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What action do you take?

Q.2—As South, vulnerable, you hold:

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The bidding has proceeded:
West North East South
1 NT Pass 3 ♠ Pass

What action do you take?

Q.3—As South, vulnerable, you hold:

♠ 987652 952 ♠ 832
The bidding has proceeded:
West North East South
1 ♠ Dbl Rdbl?

What action do you take?

Q.4—As South, vulnerable, you hold:

♠ 987652 94 ♠ 104 ♠ 32
The bidding has proceeded:
West North East South
1 NT Pass 3 ♠ Pass

What action do you take?

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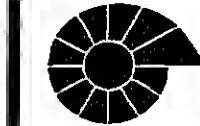
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Russian forces in major air attack; land assault imminent

SHALI, Russia (AP) — Russian forces in Chechnya staged massive air strikes and captured a key road between two rebel-held villages Sunday, signalling an imminent ground assault on the south of the breakaway republic.

The rebels' military commander, meanwhile ruled out further peace talks with the Russians.

"I think we've probably had enough of peace talks," said the commander, Gen. Aslan Maskhadov.

Russian interior ministry troops dug in positions for five tanks and several armoured personnel carriers on the 10-kilometre stretch of road linking the villages of Samashky and Achkhoy-Martan.

"We've been here about four hours," one Russian soldier said in the early afternoon.

The Russian military command in Mozdok, just outside Chechnya, said the road, some 35 kilometres west of the capital Grozny, was captured after artillery and air strikes on rebel positions along it.

However, the new Russian position, less than a mile south of a rebel one on the Rostov-Baku highway running across Chechnya, appeared to have been taken with no resistance.

The road was the last relatively safe link between the two villages, and the new outpost effectively cut off Samashky from the rest of rebel-held areas.

In Samashky, surprised and dazed rebel fighters said they had been attacked by

helicopters at around midday. Heavy explosions sounded several times a minute as Russian forces softened up rebel positions by lobbing round after round into the village.

The Russian move on rebel-held territory, the first since the battle for the capital Grozny earlier this year, appeared to signal a long-expected assault on southern Chechnya.

Civilians remain the principal victims. Chechen Information Minister Movladi Udugov said 17 people died and 53 were wounded in air raids overnight on two mountain villages, Dzhuni-Vedeno and Kharachoi.

He said a total of one other settlements were hit by Russian warplanes Sunday, but provided no casualty figures, the Interfax news agency reported.

At a hospital in Cheryurt, Chief Surgeon Khamid Magomedov, his face gray from lack of sleep, said there was only one fighter among the 10 people brought into the hospital Saturday.

"If the frontline comes any closer, we'll have to move south once more," said Dr. Magomedov, as the bombing threatened to shake loose more glass from the hospital windows.

The mostly indiscriminate shelling makes it almost impossible to judge where the frontline begins and ends. "Don't travel up that road," advised one Chechen, "the Germans (Russian soldiers) are there."

Smoke and dust hung over

the horizon as Russian forces shelled and rocketed the villages of Chechen-Aul, Stary Atagi, Goyity and Shali.

A group of men on the outskirts of Stary Atagi ducked as shells exploded in a field nearby. Chechen children played games in the streets outside their homes in the early spring sunshine, paying no heed to the bombardment.

In Shali, southeast of Grozny, Gen. Maskhadov said there was no sense in further peace talks after negotiations with the Russian military failed to take place on Saturday.

The general said he had been kept waiting for three hours in Samashky to meet with his Russian military counterparts, none of whom turned up.

He said many areas south and east of Grozny remained under his control, adding that his forces were prepared to repulse any Russian ground assault.

"Any weapons we need, we capture from the Russians," Gen. Maskhadov said as he denied Russian reports about weapons supplies to Chechens from neighbouring Azerbaijan.

But in Shali, where a few sorry-looking Russian women risked waiting next to Chechen headquarters to catch glimpses of their sons, prisoners of war, the mood was far from the cheerful courage displayed by the Chechen fighters in Grozny last January.

Their tired faces still showed resolve but like their wolf symbol, they looked hunted.



Palestinian mourners carry March 5 in Gaza City the body of Osama Borno, 41, a Palestinian headmaster killed near a Jewish settlement a day earlier. At least 3,000 people turned out Sunday for the funeral of Osama Borno, and PLO Chief Yasser Arafat attended his burial as police fired a 21-gun salute.

According to the Palestinian police, he was killed when Israeli soldiers opened fire on his car, killing him and wounding a passenger, but the Israeli army denied shooting Borno saying he was killed by Palestinian bullets (AFP photo)

Arafat joins thousands at Borno's burial

GAZA (Agencies) — PLO chief Yasser Arafat joined hundreds of mourners on Sunday for the burial of a headmaster killed in a Gaza incident in which Israeli and Palestinian security forces opened fire.

Confusion surrounded the death on Saturday of secondary school headmaster Osama Borno, 41, killed while driving in his car past the scene near Netzarim Jewish settlement.

Gaffiti near the dead man's house warned Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin that the Islamic Jihad group was planning a revenge attack against Israel.

"Islamic Jihad will get revenge soon for the martyr Osama Borno and we will make your eyes weep, Rabin, as you made our eyes weep for our martyr," said the message signed by the Islamic Jihad military wing.

An Israeli military source said neighbouring Israeli and Palestinian security force

positions apparently both came under fire, which they returned. A preliminary finding showed Palestinian fire had killed Mr. Borno, he said.

Brigadier-General Saeb Al Agiz, head of Palestinian security services in the south of the self-ruled Gaza Strip, insisted Israeli fire killed the man and a joint Israeli-Palestinian committee was set up to investigate the incident.

Gen. Agiz said the shooting began when Arabs collaborating with Israel moved towards the Palestinian police position. Police warned them to stop and then fired, drawing random fire from the Israelis who shot Mr. Borno, he said.

Mourners shouted Allahu Akbar (God is Greatest) during the funeral for Mr. Borno, whose body was wrapped in a Palestinian flag atop a car leading a procession. Police gave him a 21-gun salute and PLO officials called it a state

funeral. The head of justice in the Palestinian Authority, Freih Abu Medeen, told reporters Jewish settlements in the area where the shooting happened would have to be removed.

"Israel should take a decision to remove settlements from this area. This is the only solution. Otherwise this bloody incident will be repeated daily," he said.

"Is this your peace, oh Arafat? The peace of oppression, jails and assassinations?" chanted Hamas militants who joined thousands of mourners marching through Gaza's narrow streets.

"I tell you that a pledge is a pledge... to carry on the march until one of our children hoists the Palestinian flag over Jerusalem, the fences of Jerusalem, the minarets of Jerusalem and churches of Jerusalem," Mr. Arafat told thousands of angry mourners gathered at the graveside.

Such statements by Mr. Arafat evoke anger in Israel, which claims all of Jerusalem as its capital. The 1993 Israel-PLO accord postpones negotiations over the city's future until next year.

The crowd of mourners included prominent Hamas members.

"Hamas will take revenge for the martyr," read a slogan sprayed on a wall near Borno's house.

Hamas, which opposes the Israel-PLO peace process, has claimed most of the attacks which have left 36 Israelis dead since October. The violence has delayed efforts to expand the 10-month-old Gaza-Jericho autonomy to the West Bank.

Later the Palestinian cabinet issued a statement condemning suggestions from Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres that Mr. Arafat wasn't worth negotiating with if he couldn't control Hamas.

(Continued on page 3)

22 Kurdish rebels killed in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — Fresh clashes between Kurdish separatists and Turkish troops in southeast Turkey have killed 22 rebels and four other people, including three pro-government militiamen, officials said Sunday.

Fighting broke out when guerrillas from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) attacked the village of Hamzali, near Kilis in the province of Diyarbakir, early Saturday, the semi-official Anatolian News Agency said, quoting a statement from the local government.

The fighting, which continued into Sunday, left five members of the pro-government militia wounded.

the statement added. Army operations were still going on Sunday in the region, the statement said.

It said the rebels killed Saturday were part of a group who attacked the same village on January 1, killing 19 civilians, including seven children and eight women.

The PKK has led a rebellion against Turkish rule in the east and southeast of the country since 1984 during which an estimated 15,000 people have died.

In the past three weeks, clashes and army raids have left almost 230 people dead, including six soldiers and three militiamen, according to official tolls.

Also Sunday a grenade exploded in a grandstand during a football match in southeast Turkey, wounding two people, the Anatolian News Agency reported.

The Russian-made explosive was thrown from outside the stadium in the town of Diyarbakir. The grandstand was practically empty at the time, averting a higher casualty toll, the semi-official agency said.

The incident occurred during a second-round match, which resumed after the explosion and the evacuation of the wounded.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Violent clashes in Bahrain — opposition

NICOSIA (AFP) — Anti-riot police fired live and rubber bullets as well as tear gas at demonstrators in the third straight day of clashes in Bahrain, opposition leaders said Sunday.

Violence erupted Saturday in the Shiite Muslim villages of Karzak and Jid Hama, northwest of the capital Manama, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB) said.

Protesters demanding political reforms and the release of prisoners also clashed with police in Bilad Al Qadim in the southwest, said the IFLB in a statement received by AFP in Cyprus. It did not mention casualties.

Witnesses said violent

clashes in the Sunni-led Gulf Arab archipelago erupted on Thursday during celebrations to end the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

Witnesses said two demonstrators were killed but this was not confirmed by the IFLB, or Bahraini authorities.

Bahraini officials however denied the demonstrations had taken place. The country was enjoying "security, stability, and tranquility," they said in a statement carried by the Gulf News Agency Friday.

The first riots to hit Bahrain since it gained independence from Britain in 1971 erupted following the arrest on Dec. 5 of Shiite

Muslim cleric Sheikh Ali Salman who had demanded the restoration of parliament suspended in 1975.

The cleric was later deported to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, from where he travelled to Britain and asked for political asylum.

The opposition has named eight people killed in the protests and more than 3,000 arrested. The government said only a policeman had died.

To mark Eid Al Fitr feast ending Ramadan, the emir of Bahrain, Sheikh Issa Ben Salman Al Khalifa, pardoned 100 people implicated in December's clashes, an official said.

Ramos arrives in UAE for talks on trade ties

ABU DHABI (R) — Philippines President Fidel Ramos arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Sunday for a short official visit, the official Emirates news agency said.

It said Mr. Ramos was met at Abu Dhabi airport by UAE President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan.

Roy Seneres, the Philippines ambassador in the

UAE, told Reuters that Mr. Ramos will discuss with Sheikh Zayed trade ties and political issues. He will end his visit on Monday.

Mr. Ramos hopes to promote Philippine exports to the UAE and investment in the Philippines by the Gulf Arab state, Mr. Seneres said, adding: "It's going to be a general sort of discussion."

The UAE is the biggest market in the Middle East for

Philippine exports, mainly textiles and foodstuffs. About 80,000 Filipinos work in the UAE, many in service industries or as domestic servants.

Mr. Ramos will also discuss political issues including a conflict with separatist Muslim guerrillas in the Philippine island of Mindanao in which Islamic countries are mediating.

Nuclear treaty, peace talks top Arab agenda

CAIRO (AFP) — The Middle East Arab countries including Syria, is threatening not to renew its membership of the treaty for an unlimited duration unless Israel joins for the first time.

The ministers will also discuss a draft treaty aimed at turning the Middle East into a region free of weapons of mass destruction, Mr. Omran told Egypt's official Middle East News Agency.

Arab League experts failed to reach agreement on the wording of the treaty and definition of the Middle East

when they met here last month.

The ministers will also discuss "the peace process and obstacles created by Israel," he said. They will discuss Jerusalem, claimed by both the Arabs and Israel, as well as Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Golan Heights — which Israel captured in 1967 and which Syria wants to recover completely before it makes peace — and Israel's occupation of South Lebanon will also come under discussion.

The U.N. embargo imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the U.N. sanctions imposed in 1992 on Libya for its refusal to extradite two suspects in the downing of a Pan Am airliner over Scotland will be on the agenda.

The withdrawal of U.N. troops from league member Somalia will be raised.

The ministers must also examine the financial problems plaguing the organisation which has a deficit of \$100 million (see story page 2).

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NEW YORK (R) — A shadowy informant whose truthfulness the FBI has doubted is expected to be a key witness as early as Monday against a militant Muslim cleric and his followers accused of plotting to bomb U.S. landmarks.

Defence lawyers eagerly await the appearance of Emad Salem, a mysterious former Egyptian army officer who the government dropped as an informant in 1992 after he failed polygraph lie detector tests.

Mr. Salem's credibility may play a pivotal role in the trial's outcome as he is the man who infiltrated the inner

circle of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman and learned of what prosecutors allege was a massive plot to "wage a war of urban terrorism" in this country.

However, defence lawyers maintain that it was Mr. Salem, 43, who hatched the plan and then lured other clients into the scheme in order to earn more than a million dollars in fees from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

They believe he may have been working as an Egyptian agent at the same time and created the scheme to entrap Sheikh Abdul Rahman, who advocates the overthrow of

the Egyptian government. "You will find that he is a vile, sleazy, disgusting human being," Roger Stavis, a defence lawyer, told the jury during opening statements.

Mr. Abdul Rahman and 10 others are accused of plotting the fatal Feb. 26, 1993, World Trade Centre blast and of planning to blow up the United Nations building and other U.S. landmarks and to assassinate political and religious leaders.

In addition to the bomb plot allegations, the defendants are accused of plotting the 1990 murder of radical Rabbi Meir Kahane and of planning to assassinate Egypt-

ian President Hosni Mubarak during a visit to the United States.

Prosecutors are trying to meet credibility problems head on. In opening statements, they admitted to the jury that Mr. Salem lied during a trial involving a traffic accident and also warned jurors they may not like Mr. Salem, a burly man who authorities say is given to bragging.

"The bottom line is, while there are some things that won't paint a pretty picture, there is concrete corroboration of every important thing that he tells you, and you will know that these defendants

were planning a day of terror the likes of which the world has never seen," assistant U.S. attorney Robert Khuzami told the jury.

In February Siddiq Ibrahim Siddiq Ali, previously a defendant in the case, pleaded guilty and may take the stand to corroborate Mr. Salem's testimony.

Last Thursday, prosecutors agreed to the defence request that the jury be told the FBI required Mr. Salem to take polygraph tests in 1992.

However, the jury will not hear that the results from two of the tests was "deceptive" and one test proved inconclusive.

Mr. Salem emerged as an informant during the 1991 New York state trial of El Sayyid Nosair, accused of killing Mr. Kabane. Mr. Nosair was acquitted of the state murder charge but was convicted of lesser weapon and assault charges.

Although authorities have said that Mr. Salem was an informant as early as November of that year and had spoken of a plot to bomb U.S. landmarks, officials cut ties with the informant prior to the 1993 World Trade Centre explosion.

The break apparently happened after the results of the last polygraph test.

Mr. Salem resurfaced in the spring of 1993 after the World Trade Centre bombing. Prosecutors said the explosion, which killed six and injured more than 1,000, was the worst terrorist attack on U.S. soil.

Mr. Salem was responsible for a government raid in June 1993 at a suspected bomb factory where some of the defendants were found mixing explosives that prosecutors said were meant for the U.N. and other locations.

The informant has given the government hundreds of recordings and video tapes of the defendants allegedly planning the attacks.

COLUMN

Brazil TV films police executing robber

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazilian television broadcast the death of a robbery suspect, who was shot by police officer Saturday. Another police officer held down Rio's Globo Television Network showed the police officer shoot the suspect three times in the back on a busy street. The shooting occurred after three armed hand-to-hand tried to rob an armoured car at a busy shopping centre around noon Saturday, said a Globo Television employee, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Police disrupted the robbery attempt and killed the driver of the getaway van in a gunfight that followed, he said. There were unconfirmed reports that a third bandit was shot to death as he tried to flee on a city bus. After police arrested the other man, the news clip showed five officers dragging him to the side of the van. The segment showed a crowd watching as an officer shot him to death with the suspect's revolver. The officer then rushed up to the camera crew and showed the robber's empty chamber, shouting something unintelligible toward the camera. State Security Secretary Eucimar Da Silva ordered an investigation, calling on police to identify and punish the police officers responsible. Tension within police ranks has risen recently in the wake of several recent shootings deaths of police officers. Armed robbers killed one police detective Thursday night as he tried to stop a holdup in a poor Rio neighbourhood. Days earlier, hand-to-hand ambushes and killed three police officers on a Rio highway.

Pope ready to receive dismissed French bishop

PARIS (R) — Pope John Paul II has told French bishop he is ready to receive Bishop Jacques Gaillot, France's "red cleric" whom the Vatican sacked in January for his liberal views, the headquarter of the French church said Saturday. A statement from the French Bishops' Conference said its president, Monsignor Joseph Duval, visited the Vatican from Thursday to Saturday and met the Pope. "Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Bernard Gantin are ready to receive Monsignor Jacques Gaillot as soon as he requests it," the French church statement said. Bishop Gaillot, 59, immediately said in a radio interview he had decided to accept the invitation and would make the request. The church statement said the Vatican wanted to help Bishop Gaillot "exercise his ministry with the rights and duties that this entails." The statement said the Pope listened at length to a report by Fr. Duval on the reaction of French Catholics to Bishop Gaillot's removal as bishop of the Norman city of Evreux. Thousands of people protested after Bishop was fired from his diocese for upsetting Rome with his liberal views on such issues as birth control and workers' rights.

Clean-up Australia day uncovers body

SYDNEY (R) — A massive public clean-up of Australia uncovered a woman's decomposing body and left leading politician facing medical tests for possible viruses contracted after being pricked by a needle from used syringe. A family of three volunteers taking part in Clean-up Australia Day found the woman's body in Chinaman's Beach on Sydney's lower North Shore. Police spokesman said the body had been in the water for some time. New South Wales State Premier John Fahey, in the middle of an election campaign, pricked his finger on a used syringe needle while helping to clean up a western suburb of Sydney. Mr. Fahey said he would undergo medical tests to see whether he has contracted any virus from the needle prick. Some 500,000 people around Australia volunteered to help clean up their neighbourhood Sunday, with more adventurous using sea gear to clean harbours and rivers. Clean-up Australia Day was first held in 1980.